

OPERA OMNIA VOL. VII

RAIMON PANIKKAR

HINDUISM AND
CHRISTIANITY

VOLUME VII

21

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Opera Omnia

Volume VII

Hinduism and Christianity

Opera Omnia

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SERIES FOREWORD

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This *Opera Omnia* ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Śiva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, *karman*, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying *scripta manent*, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live out Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Sante Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this *Opera Omnia*, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitted their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

1. In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.
2. Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.
3. Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.
4. The publisher's preference for the *Opera Omnia* to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original written works.

I thank my various translators, who have rendered the various languages I have happened to write in into the spirit of multiculturalism—which I believe is ever relevant in a world where cultures encounter each other in mutual enrichment, provided they do not mislay their specificity. I am particularly grateful to Milena Carrara Pavan, to whom I have entrusted the publication of all my written works, which she knows deeply, having been at my side in dedication and sensitivity during the last twenty years of my life.

R.P.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Hindü Scriptures

<i>AB</i>	<i>Aitareya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>AU</i>	<i>Aitareya-Upaniṣad</i>
<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva-veda</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>
<i>BGB</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā-bhāṣya</i>
<i>BhagP</i>	<i>Bhāgavata-purāṇa</i>
<i>BP</i>	<i>Brahma-purāṇa</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Brahma Sūtra</i>
<i>BSBh</i>	<i>Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya of Śaṅkara</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>BUB</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad-bhāṣya</i>
<i>CU</i>	<i>Chāndogya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>GopB</i>	<i>Gopatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>IsU</i>	<i>Īśa-upaniṣad</i>
<i>JaimB</i>	<i>Jaiminiya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>KaivU</i>	<i>Kaivalya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KarnPar</i>	<i>Mahābhārata Karna-parvan</i>
<i>KathS</i>	<i>Kāthaka-saṃhitā</i>
<i>KathU</i>	<i>Kāthā-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KausB</i>	<i>Kauṣītaki-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>KausU</i>	<i>Kauṣītaki-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KenU</i>	<i>Kena-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KenUBh</i>	<i>Kena-upaniṣad-bhāṣya</i>
<i>MahanarU</i>	<i>Mānārāyaṇa-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MaitS</i>	<i>Maitrāyaṇi-Saṃhitā</i>
<i>MaitU</i>	<i>Maitrī-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MandU</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>Manu</i>	<i>Mānava-dharmaśāstra</i>
<i>MB</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>MundU</i>	<i>Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>NarS</i>	<i>Nārada-sūtra</i>
<i>PrasnU</i>	<i>Praśna-upaniṣad</i>
<i>PVB</i>	<i>Pañcaviṃśa-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>Ram</i>	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>

<i>RV</i>	<i>R̥g-veda</i>
<i>SantPar</i>	<i>Mahābhārata-Śānti-parvan</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>SivPur</i>	<i>Śiva-purāṇa</i>
<i>SU</i>	<i>Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad</i>
<i>SubU</i>	<i>Subāla-upaniṣad</i>
<i>SV</i>	<i>Sāma Veda</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>Taittirīya Āraṇyaka</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TMB</i>	<i>Tāṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Taittirīya Saṁhitā</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Taittirīya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>VasDbSas</i>	<i>Vasiṣṭha-dharma-śāstra</i>
<i>VanP</i>	<i>Mahābhārata Vana-parvan</i>
<i>VeSa</i>	<i>Vedānta-sāra</i>
<i>ViṣnuP</i>	<i>Viṣṇu-purāṇa</i>
<i>YS</i>	<i>Yoga Sūtra</i>
<i>YV</i>	<i>Yajur Veda (Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā)</i>

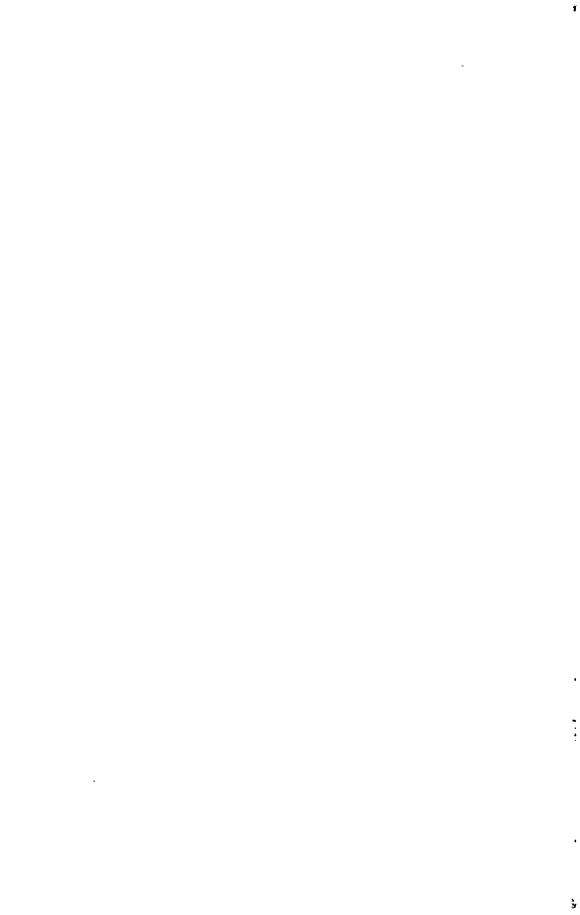
Christian Scriptures

1 Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
1 Jn	First Letter of John
1 Kgs	First Kings
1 Pet	First Letter of Peter
1 Sam	First Samuel
1 Th	First Letter to the Thessalonians
1 Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2 Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
2 Chron	Second Chronicles
2 Jn	Second Letter of John
2 Kgs	Second Kings
2 Pet	Second Letter of Peter
2 Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
3 Jn	Third Letter of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Am	Amos
Bar	Baruch
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel
Dt	Deuteronomy
Eccclus	Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians

Exod	Exodus
Ez	Ezekiel
Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis
Hab	Habakkuk
Heb	Letter to the Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jas	James
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John
Joe	Joel
Lk	Luke
Mal	Malachi
Mt	Matthew
Mc	Micah
Mk	Mark
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Prov	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
Qo	Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)
Rev	Revelation
Rom	Letter to the Romans
Song	Song of Songs
Tt	Titus
Ws	Wisdom
Zech	Zechariah

Others

<i>Denz.-Schon.</i>	<i>H. J. D. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolarum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, A. Schönmetzer (ed.), Barcinone: Herder, 1973</i>
<i>DW</i>	<i>Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke, Die deutschen Werke, I–V, J. Quint and G. Steer, eds., Stuttgart: Stuttgart, 1936ff.</i>
<i>LW</i>	<i>Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke, Die lateinischen Werke, I–V, E. Benz, K. Christ, B. Decker, et al., eds., Stuttgart: Stuttgart, 1936ff.</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Migne, J.-P. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, Paris, 1857–66</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Migne, J.-P. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Paris, 1844–55</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae</i>



INTRODUCTION

This volume, which follows *Cultures and Religions in Dialogue*, concentrates particularly on the dialogue between the two religions to which the author belongs by birth, and which he has been true to throughout his whole life: he has always continued to feel profoundly Christian and yet authentically Hindū.

The issue of the encounter between these two religious traditions has been developed in the treatise *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, which will fittingly open this volume.

This subject is part of a much wider question: the meeting between cultures and religions. It addresses the problem of contemporary humanity. Today we are forced to live in a modern Babel, with a mixture of races, cultures, and religions, sometimes so chaotic that our identity must be forged not only within our own ethnic, political, or religious context but also against the background of other living traditions. This is a difficult subject to summarize. It must be lived, and the fruits of the encounter will ripen in their own time. The belief that we are masters of space and time, and that therefore the human rhythm, like matter, can be accelerated at will, is one of the most deleterious ideas spread by a certain scientific worldview.

Anyway, we do not claim to exhaust the many dimensions of the Hindū-Christian dialogue, because it is still a dialogue in the making, and obeys no law other than that of the Spirit.

Christians today are faced with an unavoidable question: "Can I be an authentic Christian?" That is, "Can I live the depth and fullness of the Christian message and, at the same time, make room within myself for other religions without giving them a secondary role?" Is it possible to be a "true" Christian without being exclusivist or fanatic? Or is the only alternative to be a lukewarm Christian and profess a watered-down Christianity? Is true Christianity necessarily intolerant? And again, does this mean that truth, or the belief in truth, leads to intolerance? Could not truth itself be pluralistic?

A full Christian life today is not possible as long as there is indifference to, or only a negative tolerance of, other religions. The commandment to love our neighbor means we have to know our neighbor, and we cannot know them without sharing their religiosity. This participation in the religious beliefs of our neighbor becomes an opportunity for us to question our own. Our neighbor's faith is part of our own religious development. If we are not able somehow to live the religious experience of our brethren, we cannot pretend to have understood their faith, much less presume to pass judgment upon it.

The New Problem

From the beginning of the modern era to the middle of the twentieth century, during the European era of world history (that is, the age of colonialism), most Christians were convinced they had sole possession of the truth: Christianity was assumed to contain the truth, to be the only true religion, and therefore the only path to salvation. Other religions were seen as either the work of the devil or as merely the veiled, dim yearnings of a human nature that, left alone, was incapable of reaching Man's supernatural end. At most, they would

be considered expressions of Man's perennial search for God, and not the saving descent of God himself among Men. Christians were well aware that they were not "worthy" of such a high calling, termed "grace" or "vocation," but the Christian message was seen as the only one with saving power.

To avoid exclusivity and injustice, theologians endeavored to clarify certain necessary distinctions, such as those between the church and the kingdom of God, between stubborn ignorance and bona fide error, between the visible and the anonymous members of the church, between revelation and religion. But the principle, more or less explicit, remained the same: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: "Outside the church there is no salvation." But what was the church? Obviously, the church was "us," even though different degrees of belonging to the church were recognized. "Quicumque vult salvus esse . . ."—"Whoever wants salvation must first of all profess the Catholic faith," begins the famous hymn attributed to St. Athanasius, preserved in the Roman breviary until the Second Vatican Council.

After World War II, when Europe and the United States began to realize they could no longer be the masters of the world, when all around them new independent nations were appearing, this feeling of self-sufficiency on the part of Christians slowly began to change. Here we have an interesting example of the connection between theory and practice. The world's new historical situation produced a new theological reflection. Today, Christians are looking for an identity that does not betray their tradition and yet does justice to a new awareness of the facts.

The Second Vatican Council may be considered a landmark of this change: the age of colonialism had passed, at least theoretically and politically, although not economically and technologically. At the heart of the colonialist attitude is a radical monism: it admits of only *one* form of culture, *one* civilization (the others are either barbarians or simply outdated), *one* world (naturally understood as *our* concept of "world" and "unity"), and *one* religion. One God, one church, one empire is the ideal, although in practice one may speak of the necessity of being broad-minded, leaving room for "accidental differences." In the Christian framework, the ideal consisted in the absolute Christianization of the world: one shepherd, one flock.¹ The abandonment of this conviction brought about a corresponding change in Christian belief and self-understanding.

Today we are in the midst of a painful *metanoia*, a mutation of consciousness. It is not surprising that many speak of this time as one of crisis. Mere palliatives are of no use here. It is undeniable that both the theology as well as the *consensus fidelium* of the last Christian centuries were based on the unquestioned superiority of Christianity—a perspective that is understandable, given certain premises of historic monotheism. If there is only one God and one history, and this God has manifested himself—even incarnated—in history, the *Absolutheitsanspruch*, the Christian claim to absoluteness, is an inevitable consequence.

An Often-Overlooked Methodological Observation

It is unfair to present the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity unilaterally. If the Christian point of view is important and crucial to the encounter, so is that of the Hindū. The latter must be taken into account as seriously as the former. If Christianity has changed, so has Hinduism. If Christianity has reflected about the meaning and value of other religions, Hinduism has also tackled the question. In fact, Hinduism, unlike Christianity,

¹ See Jn 10:16.

has never considered itself to be the only true religion, thereby seeing its destiny as being the world religion. In general, Hinduism has never had a direct missionary thrust.

The very word "Hinduism" may be misleading. The term was originally introduced only to differentiate most Indic traditions from Islam and Christianity; it was born of reaction and comparison. On the other hand, this label has endowed it with a certain unity. Hinduism, in effect, represents a conglomerate of India's many autochthonous traditions. If we were to define Hinduism, we would state that it is more an existence than an essence, more a plain reality "here below" than an ideal world or a body of doctrines. In fact, an atheist, a theist, a monotheist, a dualist, an animist, and an a-dualist could equally consider themselves "perfect" Hindūs. Hinduism really has no main dogma, although in it we may discover some common traits, some central spiritual elements such as the idea of *karman*, the multiformity and multiplicity of the divine, the hierarchical structure of reality not only in the objective realm but in the subjective one, and so on. For Hinduism there are several truths—degrees of truth—but only one reality: *ekam evadvitīyam*. Conversely, Western Christianity believes that truth is one and can only be one, but allows, on the other hand, different degrees of reality. The one thing compensates for the other.

Be that as it may, Hinduism, when comparing itself to positive, well-defined religions like Christianity, usually describes itself as the *sanātana dharma*, the perennial order of things; it sees itself as the expression of the fundamental experience of Man, that is, the original religiosity that has taken a particular form in India but that may take other forms in other peoples and cultures. This everlasting *dharma* is inherently transcultural and transtemporal, and can flow into as many cultural or religious forms as will receive it. The self-understanding of Hinduism emanates from premises entirely different from those of Christianity: they cannot be simplistically compared. The way Hinduism understands itself in relation to other religions finds no direct parallel in the Christian views.

Hinduism does not consider itself contrary to, or in competition with, other religions. It does not possess, strictly speaking, very much historical awareness. One may not speak, therefore, of "historical mission" in the Christian sense. For instance, a traditional Hindū, when living in the West, would also, by the very fact that he is a good Hindū, want to be considered a good Christian; he would strive to be as Christian as a Westerner could be, but without ever ceasing to be a true Hindū. To be "Hindū" simply means to be religious and has its origin and principle in the concrete, existential situation in which people live.

Ignorance of this aspect of Hinduism has created many misunderstandings and considerable tensions that could otherwise have been avoided. Typical Christians, for example, will spontaneously refuse to take part in the religious ceremonies of a Hindū temple. It would feel like a betrayal of their religion. Typical Hindūs, on the contrary, will instinctively want to participate, if they have the chance, in the Christian liturgy. Not to do so would seem to them to be not only offensive to their hosts but also a betrayal of their very religiosity. What is sacred is sacred, no matter where and under what form, and Hindūs want to participate in it due to the very fact of their Hinduism. It is only recently that a certain spirit of exclusivism has also arisen in India—mainly as a reaction to Muslim and Christian attitudes.

Traditional Hindūs were confronted with a completely different conception of religion that arose from Christianity and Islam. They were called *kafir* (heathens, infidels), and they were supposedly required to convert. Hindū consciousness was born out of this confrontation. Thus Hinduism began to base its identity on differentiation and shape its self-understanding as a way of defending itself. If Christianity and Islam, two Abrahamic religions, affirm that they are simply the *one* universal religion, Hinduism, for its part, replies that it is the world's

broadest and most profound religion: the most profound because no other tradition can boast of so deep a mystical experience; the broadest because in Hinduism, by definition, all world religions are integrated and contained. If Christianity claims to be the truth of religion, Hinduism claims to be the religion of truth.

Discussing the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity means starting with different assumptions compared to discussing the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism. As history has shown, when this double relation is not taken into account, many misunderstandings arise. An authentic theology, even though it never ceases to be theoretical reflection, must always be practical.

Christianity and Hinduism

For a clear view of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, at least three conditions must be met:

- We must remain loyal to the Christian tradition. This is the theological issue.
- We must not violate other traditions; they must be interpreted according to their own self-understanding. This is the hermeneutical issue.
- We must not leave aside the critical scrutiny of contemporary culture. This is the philosophical problem.

The Theological Issue

First of all, tradition is not simply a mechanical repetition of what has been, but the living transmission (*tradere*: to transmit) of the crystallized experience of what has happened. Tradition does not mean stagnation but continuation and growth. Tradition does not necessarily call to mind an antiquarian's obsession with artifacts. We talk about tradition, or transmission, only when something is actually given, handed over, and communicated, and not when it is merely preserved. With the passing of generations the mentality of the receivers of tradition changes, along with their capacity to receive. Therefore, to maintain continuity, that which is transmitted must also change. If Man and his vision of himself and his reality are constantly growing and changing, what tradition transmits must also grow and expand in order to be faithful to the tradition itself.

In this light, the Christian claim to superiority must be "retransmitted," and due account must be taken of the multiple changes that lead to a transformed contemporary consciousness, along with the reasons that shaped an earlier mentality of exclusiveness.

Christianity's claim that Christ is the *Pantokrator*—by which and for which everything was made, alpha and omega, beginning and end of the universe, firstborn of creation, universal redeemer and only savior—still holds true. But the proper context of these assertions must be examined.

Christians need not abandon the assertion of the truth of their faith. This assertion speaks of Christ as the symbol par excellence of the new life, creator and redeemer of all reality. Through Christ all things are transfigured, made divine. But this does not mean that Christians have the monopoly on Christ or that their knowledge of him is exhaustive of his full reality. Who is this Christ? How and where does he act? This continues to be a mystery, even for Christians, even though they may claim more intimate knowledge of certain of his traits—his historicity, for instance. But there is nothing contradictory in stating that

other cultures and religions are aware of other dimensions and aspects of this Mystery that Christians call Christ.

In Christian parlance, which is not that of the Hindū (and there is no reason why it should be), Christ is active and present in Hinduism, although hidden and unknown. What gives Hinduism its saving power is precisely what Christians call Christ, even though in Hinduism it may have other names and be expressed in other forms. But at this juncture we should make two points.

First of all, the same is true for Christianity: Christ is indeed active and present, but also hidden and unknown, in Christianity itself. Where and how he acts upon human beings, and upon Christians, belongs to the realm of mystery. How and when he is found are also outside our knowledge: this mystery is held in common as well. "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you a drink, a stranger and made you welcome, or naked and clothed you?"²

Second, the fact that different names are given to what we have here called Mystery does not mean that there exists a "thing in itself," Mystery, and that this "object" is then given different names. The name is a living word, the symbol of the thing itself. The word as symbol both *re-veals* and *veils* that of which it speaks.

So, although Christians cannot call Christ by other names, there still remain other aspects or dimensions unknown to Christians that are not covered by, though still connected to, the name of Christ. A pluralism of names indicates precisely the multidimensional nature of the "thing" and the impossibility of its being detached or abstracted from the person who contemplates it. Only in the Spirit can we truly pronounce the saving Name.³

From this perspective, there are at least three possible ways to interpret the Christian fact:

1. Christianity is the absolute religion; the others are either not religions at all or are only on the way to becoming one. One could also say Christianity is not a religion but is pure faith, or metareligion. Christianity represents to human reason the scandal of the sovereign freedom of God. Any attempt at rationalization is blasphemous. This would be the conservative and a-historical explanation of the current situation.

2. Christianity is one religion among many. It is a true and authentic religion, but it cannot claim any right to exclusivity. It is conditioned by culture and time. Christianity continues to be pure truth to its believers, but it belongs within the larger framework of universal history. Before Christ there was no Christianity, and we must not extrapolate outside the sphere of those who explicitly call themselves Christians. This is the critical-cultural explanation of the present-day situation.

3. Christianity is certainly a true religion. It points to a Mystery that Christians can only identify with the one they know as Christ, but Christ is present in all authentic religions in ways proper to them. In this sense, all true religions are linked together through a kind of perichoresis. Christianity is a manifestation of this Mystery. From this perspective, we can and should state that Christianity is a revelation of the Mystery, but we cannot know directly if there are other manifestations. This is the mystical or metahistorical explanation of the current situation, as well as a great part of the current theological reflection.

The first condition, then, is that any reflection that calls itself Christian must take Christian self-interpretation into consideration and critically acknowledge possible changes in Christian self-understanding. This first condition raises a number of theological problems.

² See Mt 25:37–38, 44.

³ See 1 Cor 12:3.

The Hermeneutical Issue

The second condition concerns the hermeneutical question, that is, the balanced scientific-religious interpretation of the different human traditions and, in our case, of Hinduism.

Moreover, an authentic relationship between Christianity and Hinduism cannot be based upon a caricature or on insufficient interpretation. Goodwill is necessary but not sufficient. What is required is an intimate knowledge of the nature of Hinduism, knowledge that must be the fruit of a personal sympathy and one's own experience. Here, too, sympathy is necessary but not sufficient. Many religious movements today show great sympathy for and inclination toward other traditions. This is important and positive, but it is also a cause of confusion when this sympathy is felt without a critical spirit and is not accompanied by knowledge and experience.

One's own experience is indispensable. Religions are not purely objectifiable. They are not scientific "facts." A religion cannot be known in the same way a physical law is known. Human beings do not behave like elements in a chemical reaction.

The present science of religions is engaged in elaborating categories that may leave room for this knowledge. If we approach other human traditions with categories alien to them, we will never be able to understand them. This does not mean that we cannot approach them from the outside and question them on matters that may seem pertinent to us. Indeed, this must be done. But for the question to be first intelligible and then answerable, it must be adjusted to the intellectual and spiritual world of the person to whom the question is addressed. The question of whether the *Brandenburg Concertos* are yellow or green makes no sense. To ask whether Hinduism has a Mediator without first investigating whether it needs one, is tantamount to asking whether Christianity acknowledges the *dharma* of things without looking for its homeomorphic equivalent in Christian language.

If we ask, for example, if there is in Hinduism a "God" in the sense of the Jewish YHWH, Hinduism will not be able to give a satisfactory answer: this is not its "question," and the problem is seen differently. Likewise, we will be unable to reply to the question of whether the idea of *karman* appears in Christianity. Concepts cannot be abstracted from their own conceptual world. Any concept is valid only in the context where it has been conceived. If we wish to extrapolate, the operation must be justified. The idea of God, like that of *karman*, is intimately bound up with a specific global conception of reality.

Put another way, for many people a certain linguistic imperialism still exists. This consists of the belief that monolingualism is a sufficient point of departure from which to understand the human phenomenon. This is so because deep down they believe that anything can be translated and that through their monolingual window they can contemplate the whole panorama of human experience. It is true that with knowledge of English one can go to all the most expensive hotels in the world and feel at home, but one will never share the life of ordinary people. Equally, one cannot travel in the world of religions carrying only the knowledge of Christian concepts. There is still a great deal of theological and philosophical tourism. An example of this is when we find a person speaking as if he or she knew all about Hinduism after having read a few books on the subject by some more or less Westernized authors. Each human tradition must be learned as a child first learns the language of its environment: not by comparing the words of one language with another that one already knows but by learning each new word in its own context, tasting its particular meaning, feeling its power in the living reality of experience.

This is what brings us to true communication (which is always *communicatio in sacris*) and frees us from the illusion that we can teach without having first learned. To learn is to

become a disciple and not a master; furthermore, it means to be converted to the world of the things learned.

Here we shall have a genuine phenomenology of religion if we can succeed in transforming the Husserlian *noema* into what I have taken the liberty of calling the *pisteuma*. In other words, the faith of the believer is itself part and parcel of the religious phenomenon. If I do not come to share the *pisteuma*, the faith of the believer, I am left with only a purely objective *noema*, and I will not have truly described the phenomenon. I cannot understand the other if I do not believe that, in a certain sense, he or she is also in possession of the truth. Only truth is intelligible.

Only if we delve deeply into the study and practice of religions can we understand one another, and only then is cross-fertilization possible.

For the sake of brevity, I will limit myself to the formulation of the following two theses.

1. *There is no Christian doctrine that one cannot more or less find in Hinduism.* The Trinity, the incarnation, love of one's neighbor, the resurrection—all of these things may be found in Indic wisdom. We are speaking of doctrines, for facts as such are unique, in Hinduism as in Christianity. Also, we are speaking of homeomorphic equivalents, not of first-degree analogies. Religions are not carbon copies of one another. Only when seen from the outside do they all seem alike, like the faces of the Japanese to Europeans. Seen from within, they are all unique (and therefore unique in unity), just as to a mother her two children, even if they are twins, are unique. Religions are like languages: they all sound like mindless gibberish when we do not know them. However, when we begin to learn more than one language, we see their peculiarities stand out, and understand how each possesses its own individual sap or essence, while awareness of their similarities and analogies grows.

2. *There is no general Hindū doctrine that cannot be interpreted in a Christian way.* All the doctrines—from the doctrine of *karma* to that of so-called polytheism—can be understood within the Christian context. Furthermore, the discovery of legitimate Christian interpretations of Hindū doctrines will serve to deepen and clarify Christian thought. The task of this creative hermeneutics will not always be easy but will depend upon mutual empathy and the degree to which the interpreter has entered into and has been converted by the tradition he or she wishes to interpret. Only from here will spring the possible fertilization between the two traditions, a fertilization that frees them from the danger of suffocation. Gone are the times, let us hope, when the sublime message of the Sermon on the Mount used to be contrasted with the harsh caste system and the social injustice of India—or, on the other hand, when the sublime teachings of the Upanishads were set against the horror of Christian wars and Inquisitions. In all religions we find both light and darkness.

In view of this, it is imperative today for humankind's religious life that religions encounter each other, know each other, and come to reach, if possible, a cross-fertilization. The meeting of religions is not merely the business of academics or of a few "enthusiasts" but has become a necessity for the very religious life of the mature human being today.

Here I could repeat my old thesis, backed by historical experience, that today no religion is self-sufficient, and that each needs an external impulse to help it delve into its own nucleus and to adjust itself to current necessities. The dialogue between religions is not a peripheral problem; it increasingly touches the very core of theological reflection and religious life. Speaking only of Christian theology, it will find its renaissance only if it opens itself up—as it is slowly doing—to the world of other religions. My proposal for Christianity is that it prepare a second Council of Jerusalem, not merely a Vatican III (or a Chicago I). The central problem does not consist of the internal questions of Western Christians but of the Christian identity in the face of a global and multireligious world. Does Christianity want to be an

exclusive affair of the Abrahamic worldview, or does it want to open up to real "catholicity"? If so, at what price?

We could sum up the hermeneutical issue with the following affirmation: the correct interpretation of another religion demands that interpreters be convinced of the truth of that religion (from which the believer draws the water of life) and, therefore, that they undergo a certain conversion.

The Philosophical Issue

The relationship between Christianity and other religions is a problem of religious anthropology, that is, how people see themselves within a specific religious context (Christianity) in relation to other people from different religious universes. To simplify this huge question, let us restrict ourselves to one of the thorniest points of contention, mentioned above: the traditional Christian conviction of being the only religion able to bring salvation to humankind. The statement that Christianity is the "one true religion" must be examined not only theologically but philosophically, despite the fineness of the distinction.

The truth of one religion does not imply the falsehood of others. The context of any affirmation is what qualifies it; it provides the space or environment in which the statement is meaningful. The space in which the "true religion" appears as such is one that is limited (1) historically, (2) culturally, and (3) linguistically. Outside this space the statement is meaningless. But this triple distinction is artificial since all three factors are at the same time historical, cultural, and linguistic. Therefore, we maintain it in this brief exposition just for heuristic reasons.

1. Any historical event is such because it is located in history. Furthermore, any human event can be located in history, but this already represents a certain reduction. There is no reason why every human fact must be historical, unless what is human is wholly identified with what is historical. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Christian fact from the beginning has understood itself to be a historical fact and that the two thousand years of the Christian religion are based on, or immersed in, the history that gives them meaning.

Here, two considerations are both relevant and very important.

The first is the fact that History is the primordial myth par excellence of Christianity and of any predominant Western culture. History is the horizon over which reality is disclosed: a historical fact is a real fact. Jesus is historical because he is real; that is, he really, historically existed. But the historical world is not the only human world. There are lifestyles and even whole cultures that do not live the myth of history to the same extent as does the Western Christian world. The consequence of this is obvious: the statement that Christianity is the true religion, the only "historical" religion, because it corresponds to real (i.e., historical) facts, performed as much by God as by Men—and Christians are those who give testimony to this (historical) reality—loses its meaning when taken out of the historical framework from which it comes. To talk, for example, of the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity without taking into account this different context, and without attempting to find a common base, is a task bound to fail because it is methodologically inadequate.

The second consideration has to do with the evolution of the historical consciousness of Christianity itself—aside from the fact that Christianity cannot completely identify itself with a simple historical fact. There has been an evolution in the actual interpretation of the "truth" of Christianity. It wants to be a truth that is neither fanatic nor exclusivist; it wants to acknowledge the human and saving factors outside of the Christian religion; it not only wants to respect and admire but strives also to admit the legitimacy and crucial role of other

religions, and so on. What usually happens is that Christians do not have the appropriate intellectual tools with which to tackle such a theme. This cannot be otherwise, because only a mutual dialogical dialogue with other religions and our knowledge/conversion toward them can offer adequate tools for dealing with the problem.

2. There are many different families of human cultures and subcultures, and despite all their similarities, we cannot assume a priori that they are all governed by the same code. This is what has led me to suggest a new hermeneutics that I have called *diatopic hermeneutics* (to distinguish it from the morphological and the diachronical), which attempts to thematically study cultures and traditions that have not had a common cultural source. We must remember that human spaces (*topoi*), and not only human time (*chronos*) or forms (*morphai*), are different.

As an example, and staying within the analysis of Christianity as the "one true religion," let us take the claim, from a typically Semitic way of thinking, that the truth of a statement can be understood only by means of a confrontation with its negation. Now, this *forma mentis*—which is intelligible via the principle of noncontradiction—is very different from the predominantly Eastern one that is based on the principle of identity. That God, for instance, may have chosen Israel or the church means precisely that God *has* chosen Israel or the Church (principle of identity) but not that God has *not* chosen another people or another religion (principle of noncontradiction). In this sense, the affirmation that Christianity is the true religion does not exclude the fact that other religions can also be true.

It must be admitted that the truth cannot contradict itself, but from this principle it cannot be deduced that, when Christ is said to be the only Savior, Kṛṣṇa could not also be, because it is not clear exactly what metahistorical relationship might exist between Christ and Kṛṣṇa. The Christian statement could be contradicted by stating that Christ is not the Savior, and Christianity does not tell us anything about Kṛṣṇa. Or perhaps we can assume that there may be a certain link between the two. But we do not mean to follow this line of thought here.

3. When we express ourselves in a specific language, we automatically assume the entire cultural and religious world of that language. For example, staying again on the same topic, how would the assertion that "Christianity is the true religion" be understood if put into classical Sanskrit? The fact that the word "religion" is a relatively recent invention is well known even in the Christian world. To St. Thomas Aquinas, *religio* was still a purely human virtue, despite the fact that St. Augustine had already used that "heathen" word to suggest what we mean today by "religion." In India, "religion" is usually translated as *dharma*, but then a sentence about the "true" *dharma* (which in Sanskrit literally means "real, existent, what is": *satya*), becomes something altogether different from its English counterpart, and the fact that Christianity might want to hold the monopoly on that would sound absurd. Even more, it is something that Christianity itself would not want to say. Certainly, there can be bridges between different universes of discourse, but there is no need for the relations to be only bi-univocal.

All of this leads us to reassess such a Christian statement, to see its limitations, and try to overcome them. At the same time, we must acknowledge its unacceptable part (the exclusivity) as well as the part that remains valid (the confidence of being in the truth).

In summary, the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity can be understood only in the context of religious pluralism. Each religion must be understood and judged from within its own sphere. There are doctrinal discussions among different religions in the same way that there are discussions within the traditions themselves. Two doctrines that contradict one another on the same plane cannot both be true. Thomas and Bonaventure

can be as incompatible as Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja. The incompatibility of doctrines does not rule out the respective truth of religions.

There is no reason for Christians to abandon the conviction that they have the true religion, if they understand that they must find all their truth in a Christianity that is open and dynamic. This will lead to an authentic religious dialogue.

There is no reason for Hindūs to see Christianity as a threat; likewise, Christians should not be threatened by Hinduism. Rather, each should see in the other a stimulus to deepen their own convictions.

When there is a climate of sympathy and a desire for mutual understanding, a fruitful dialogue conducive to mutual enrichment can begin. The encounter between religions is today no longer an encounter on the path of enmity or competition but on that of cross-fertilization.

About thirty years ago, I used the expression *ecumenical ecumenism* to describe the dialogue of religions. This means that the relationship between religions cannot be compared to that of two commercial enterprises that want to sell their merchandise to the same customers. Nor can it be compared to the diplomatic relations between two world powers forced to try and understand each other in order not to destroy the world. Religions are not in competition, nor are they enemies. They are like two languages that say all that they want to say, each in their own way, or two lifestyles that are part of the larger richness of human life. Each dialect is a perspective on the world, a way of being and of existing in the world, and anyway, each is not only able to complement the others but also to criticize them. In this way all are able to change and improve.

The relationship between Christianity and Hinduism could be compared to that between two lovers who speak two different languages. They love each other, and through that love they have discovered that they have the same goal and desire the same thing. But when one tries to speak of this to the other, he or she is not understood. Each must first learn the other's language. It can happen that they do not say the same thing, and certainly they will not say the same "thing" in the same way. They each have an insight into something that deeply affects both of them, without being able to articulate it. But they can love each other, help each other, find each other in daily life, and be patient and begin to learn from each other.

This last metaphor suggests an aspect somewhat neglected in certain circles. The encounter of religions has an indispensable experiential and mystical dimension. Without a certain experience that transcends the mental realm, without a certain mystical element in one's life, one cannot hope to overcome the particularism of one's own religiosity, much less to broaden and deepen it when one comes to encounter a different human experience.

The relationship could also be thus formulated: instead of asking what one can teach the other and bring to the other, it is worth asking to what extent can Christianity learn from Hinduism and vice versa.

In the light of our current thesis, the following few points should be taken into account.

a. Hinduism can learn from Christianity:

- To take the world's structures more seriously, so that practical, everyday life in general, and politics in particular, can also find their meaning within religious life. In classical Hinduism this idea was not set forth in quite this fashion because the situation was different. We must not be tempted to superimpose our current clichés of "wholeness" and "integration" on an earlier era that had its own demands and *Sitz im Leben*. But even today, for many people in India, the highest ideal in life is that of *saṃnyāsa*, renunciation, and consequently there remains a certain dichotomy between the religious life and the modern secular one. In essence, this is an example of the negative impact of Western modernity on modern India: it

has destroyed the spiritual equilibrium in much the same way that antibiotics have destroyed the demographic one.

- That the human social order must also be governed according to an immanent and direct justice, and not only according to transcendental criteria based on the "long-term" justice of future rebirths. This does not mean falling into fierce individualism (which does not solve anything), but it could mean that each human life can, or must, possess within itself a certain possibility of fulfillment, and that this possibility also depends on social (technological, political, economical, etc.) structures.

- That historicity is also an element in the human effort toward salvation. This does not mean that the insight behind the law of *karman* cannot furnish adequate answers to this question, but what is needed is a creative interpretation.

b. Christianity can learn from Hinduism:

- That the meaning of life contains a factor that is independent of the political and social adventure; thus human salvation does not solely depend on historical dimensions. It is possible to be happy and even live with a certain amount of human fulfillment in the midst of an unjust social order;

- That the structure of the universe is hierarchical. This hierarchy is also epistemological. There are, therefore, levels of perception and degrees of knowledge that surpass the general knowledge of the rational mind and, from this viewpoint, concentration, meditation, or whatever one may want to call this act of penetrating the different spheres of reality is more important than, for instance, the capacity to read and write. To live life means to find joy in the discovery of reality and to attain harmony with it, rather than seeking to control it or conquer it.

- That humanity means more than history: it also implies a cosmic transformation. Man is more, and not less, than an individual. One is part of the cosmic adventure, a limb in the body of the cosmotheandric totality. A wholly isolated human being is a mere abstraction.

All of this does not mean that the above points and similar ones are not found in other religions; it only means that, for various reasons, these points have not been sufficiently developed in some traditions, which therefore need outside stimuli to awaken such dormant, but crucial, elements. We therefore realize the appropriateness, or rather the necessity, of cross-fertilization among the different wisdoms of humanity, not so that they lose themselves and their respective identities but so that they deepen their "personalities."

We may conclude with a helpful consideration on the present-day world. For various reasons, the modern world has reached, not only in science and technology but also in the field of culture, a maximum of specialization. Modern people want to break out of this situation, but they do not know how, because it is not simply a matter of diminishing the knowledge acquired, nor of going back to an amorphous, indiscriminate state. Religions seem to have become so many specializations of the sacred, and as such they have need of specialists. The human being of our time yearns for greater simplicity and does not want to be either amateur or specialist. Contemporary people want to recover the religious and primordial human experience; they realize that it must be concrete but that it must not be particularized. The Christian would want it to be authentically Christian, but not so fanatical that it separated one from the rest of the human family. The Hindü, likewise, wants this experience to be both personal and universal. Both want to overcome religious specialization without falling into an artificial eclecticism. Today the relation between religions has become a personal religious question of how to live human life more authentically before the Mystery of infinitude that envelops us within and without.

Today Christianity and Hinduism are like brothers who meet again after centuries of separation and try to share their respective experiences. Christians may see the goal in the future, Hindūs in the present, but both see it in terms of the fully realized human person.

* * *

The first section includes one of my most well-known books, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, reworked on several occasions in its various editions in the attempt to clarify positions that had become the object of discussion. The focal point, which is often misunderstood, is the feature of the as-yet-unknown Christ who is present both in Christianity and in other religions, which can therefore contribute to a more universal vision of Christ.

The second section, which is dedicated to ecclesiology in India as an example of inculturation, describes various aspects of the encounter between these two religions.

SECTION I

THE UNKNOWN CHRIST OF HINDUISM*

* Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, translation by Geraldine Clarkson and James MacDonald from Italian into English of the completely revised edition by the author: *Il Cristo sconosciuto dell'induismo*, ed. Milena Carrara Pavan (Milan: Jaca Book, 2008); 1st ed.: *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: DLT, 1964).



THE UNKNOWN CHRIST OF HINDUISM AND THE *SEMINA VERBI*

Julien Ries

In 1976 Professor Raimon Panikkar published *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* in its first Italian edition in Vita e Pensiero.¹

Concerned about interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism, our author has examined the thought of Śaṅkara, the great Vedānta specialist and philosopher who represented, in the eighth century, the foremost classical expression of Hinduism and inspired the great Indian thinkers of today. Śaṅkara completed a summary of the Upanishads; he declared that "Brahman is" that from which "proceeds the origin of the world." Brahman is the Absolute, the Transcendent, the Unknown, but it is Īśvara who is the Lord and Creator. Īśvara is that aspect of Brahman which is not only responsible for creation but, moreover, acts in the place and on behalf of Brahman, placing himself between Brahman and the Cosmos as mediator. And so he is the beginning and the end of everything. Remaining just a beginning, he has two faces, one turned toward divinity and the other toward the created world. In himself Īśvara is the fullness of the Word; in Sanskrit *vāc*, the light sprung from light. This doctrine comes from a deep theological intuition, whose source is the *ṛṣi*, the original "seers" whose traces are evident in the śruti—that is, in the sacred texts. In the *Yoga-sūtras* Īśvara is the path that leads to union with Brahman, the Absolute: he is omniscient and not subject to the limits of time, and devotion to him constitutes the way of perfection. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the heavenly hymn of the *bhakti*, he intervenes as a personal God: not a God of cult but a God who plays his role in terms of intelligence and reflection. In the context of dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism, Raimon Panikkar recognizes an element of primary importance: in his eyes the doctrine on the identity and functions of Īśvara constitutes a fulcrum from which dialogue should have its starting point, as long as we admit a *sensus plenior*, an interpretation that goes beyond the letter, in the Vedānta, the ultimate Vedic thought. In such a perspective a Christian theology of religions, Panikkar shows, should seek a path by which God leads men toward the Christ using the different religions of humanity.

Raimon Panikkar invites his readers to come to grips with the problem of this search. It is not a question of putting Īśvara on the same level as Jesus Christ, the Christ of history and the Christ of Christian faith. In fact the hypothesis of a theology of religions exists on a philosophical plane and in the framework of a mental system that is indispensable to dialogue. This means that in the perspective of dialogue, in the Vedānta, Īśvara would occupy a place analogous to that of the *Logos* in Christian thought. Alongside the philosophical plane, Panikkar tells us, there is the existential plane of human history—that is, the discrete action

¹ First English edition: *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964); first French edition: *Le Christ et l'hindouisme: une présence cachée* (Paris: Centurion, 1972).

of divine Providence which inspires humanity and guides life toward its fullness, leading ideas and drawing men toward the ultimate fulfillment of history. "This conviction," says our author in the French edition of 1972 (p. 171), "is that Christ was already in the work; He was there not only when God made all things, establishing the firmament and joining the waters, but also when the *ṛṣi* sang and transmitted the Scriptures (*śruti*) because they rejoiced each day, playing music continuously in his presence and in the world, because his delights consist in being part of the sons of men" (cf. Prov 8:22–31). Here we should also cite the beginning of John's Gospel (Jn 1:1–3):

In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came into being,
not one thing came into being
except through him.

After the original publication in various languages of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Raimon Panikkar, Catholic theologian and eminent specialist on Hindū texts, reflected deeply and published many more books and articles. Panikkar has revised this book and produced a new edition with an extensive introduction. He has often written, "Jesus is the Christ, but the Christ was before Abraham." In order to avoid any ambiguity, I would like to add some historical, linguistic, and patristic notes.

In Greek the word *Christos* (anointed) derives from the verb *chriein* (to anoint) and in the Alexandrian Septuagint version of the Greek Bible it corresponds to the Hebrew word *mashiah* (messiah), proclaimed by the prophets. When Jesus of Nazareth's disciples recognized in him the promised Messiah they called him "the Christ" (Mt 1:16; Jn 20:31). The gospel spread in the Greek world, which did not understand the meaning of this Jewish epithet. Thus, Jesus was referred to with two names—Jesus the Christ (Rom 6:3; 8:1; 1 Cor 1:1–3; 1 Pet 1:13). Its use spread farther, and in Antioch the disciples of Jesus were called Christians (Acts 11:26).

At the beginning of his Gospel, John writes, "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him" (Jn 1:1–3). John goes on to describe the identity and the action of the Word, and in verse 14 adds, "The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory." Thus at the end of the first century a new term was added to the christological titles—*logos*, the Word, in Sanskrit *Vāc*, a word borrowed from Greek philosophy. For the Stoics the concept of *logos* meant the message, the gospel, the work of salvation through Christ. John sees in the *logos* the supreme revelation of the invisible God, a Person equal to the Father.

We find the christological title *logos* in the Greek patristic tradition. Between AD 153 and 155 the Greek philosopher Justin, a Christian convert, wrote his *First Apology* addressed to the emperor Antoninus, with a view to defending persecuted Christians. This was quickly followed by his *Second Apology*, addressed to the Roman Senate. We read in this text, "Those who boast of the doctrine of the Stoics, because they were excellent, at least in their moral teaching, as also, in different places, the poets because of the seeds of the Word, which are scattered among many races of men, we know have been persecuted and put to death" (*Apol.* II.8.1). The seeds of the Word, *semina verbi*, are the *logos* spread to humanity and partially

known to paganism. In *Apol.* II.8.3 and 13.3 Justin calls it the *logos spermatikos*, the seminal *logos* or divine *logos*, scattered like seeds among humanity.

Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus* or *Exhortation to the Greeks* is linked through its content to the *Apology*. After a virulent polemic against mythology, cults, and mysteries, Clement turns his attention to the philosophers and changes tone. In the section on the opinions of philosophers he highlights one fact that captures his attention: in their divination of certain wonderful phenomena, philosophers have glimpsed the truth, as though in a dream. The list of these philosophers includes Plato, the Stoic Cleanthes, and the Pythagoreans. In various chapters of his *Protrepticus*, Clement speaks of the *logos* of God or the divine *logos*, the revealer of truth. This is the Word of God and Son of God of John's Gospel.

In the distant footsteps of the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili, the Christian *saṃyāsīn*, and the more recent footsteps of fathers Pierre Johannis, Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux, and Bede Griffiths, Raimon Panikkar seeks the best path toward a philosophical and existential dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism. In his search for common ground as a starting point, he lights on the *Brahma-sūtra* I.1–2 and Śaṅkara's comment on it. Panikkar states that in the *bhakti* schools Īśvara is not only a personified God, but a personal one. The study of his nature and functions orients us toward the discovery of Īśvara's place, which allows us a point of contact with one of the functions of Christ, because Īśvara tends to look toward the mystery of the Christ: he is the *logos*, the Word.

Nevertheless, the living Christ of Christian faith cannot be put on the same level as the Īśvara of the Vedānta. At a philosophical level the place given to Īśvara in the Vedānta is analogous to that occupied by Christ in Christian thought. On the existential plane of human history, discreetly orchestrated by Providence, the *logos* (Jn 1:1) was already at work in the beginning of the cosmos. Panikkar himself believes that his thesis "finds its inspiration, illumination, and justification in the famous meeting of St. Paul with the Athenians" (Acts 17:16–34). As Paul spoke of the unknown God of the Greeks, so we can speak of the unknown Christ of Hinduism.

PREFACE TO THE 2007 EDITION

madhye vāmanam āsinam viśve devā upāsate
The Spirit whom all the Gods worship is seated in the middle.

KathU V.3¹

μέσος ὑμῶν στήκει ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε
Standing among you is one unknown to you.

Jn 1:26²

More than a quarter of a century has passed since the last edition of this book, and now it is republished after revision of its language and clarification of some points.

When I went to India, the land of my father, in 1954, for the first time as a Catholic priest, I saw that the great problem—and mine too—was the relationship between “Hinduism and Christianity,” which was also the initial title of this book in 1955 (with the subtitle “the unknown Christ of Hinduism”). I remember it was my great friend Bede Griffiths who suggested I invert the title and subtitle, and I have always been grateful to him. I also want to mention that the subject of this book has always been one of the central problems of my life, as is evident from the dates of the various introductions to different editions.

I emphasize that the adjective “unknown,” as referring to Christ, is also applicable to historical Christianity. I have repeatedly suggested that the meeting of religions, which is indispensable today, implies a mutation in the actual self-understanding of religions, and in this case of Christianity itself. After being historically anchored for almost two thousand years to the monotheistic traditions originating from Abraham, Christianity, if it claims to be Catholic, must meditate deeply on the *kenōsis* of Christ and have the courage, as it did at the first Council of Jerusalem, to free itself from the Jewish tradition (whose symbol was circumcision) and from the Roman traditions (whose symbol is Western culture) without breaking with them, and let itself be fertilized by the other traditions of humanity.

I believe it is important to point out right away that, since both Hinduism and Christianity speak about God, we use this symbol without analyzing its meaning, which would require a study of its own.

¹ Literally “the dwarf,” meaning the *puruṣa* “of the size of a thumb” who dwells in the heart. See *KathU* IV.12.

² The kingdom of God, *madhya* (medium), is not found *among* or *within* but *between* in the human relation (Lk 17:21). In the middle: the mediator, the *madhyamaka*, the center. Everything happens in the inter-action, in the mutual relationship—that is, the radical relativity of all things. And in between is the One, in the Center, who makes the interrelation a creative and constitutive intrarelation: the One whom we do not know and who is not the numerical unity.

I do not think I have impoverished the scandal of the cross; rather, I believe I have extended it to those Christians who are resistant to continuous *metanoia* (transformation), forgetting that the Spirit constantly makes all things new.

Milarupa

Pentecost 2007

PROLOGUE

tw' / ajgnwstw Cristw' /

To the unknown Christ¹

The unknown Christ, the subject of this book, is no less real than the Christ who Christians believe they know. Christ remains a Mystery in both cases. The modern mentality, which considers itself free from any superstition, maintains that human reason is a criterion of reality. This is a point one cannot contradict without falling into irrationality, in which case our life would make no sense—in both senses of the word (direction and intellectual content). However, it is one thing to maintain and defend rationality but quite another to raise it up as an absolute criterion of truth. Human thought can certainly arrive at truth, albeit imperfectly, but it does not follow that truth is reducible just to what we can think rationally. The incomprehensible may be just as real.

We are not the masters of reality. As soon as we grasp this universal experience—that is, that human consciousness extends beyond reason—space opens up for faith, for that consciousness that opens us to the unknown that is beyond reason without being irrational. To put it paradoxically, faith, from a phenomenological perspective, is the consciousness of our ignorance—that is, the consciousness that there exists a mystery above us. Blessed are those who have achieved infinite ignorance (ἀγνοσία)—Evagrius Ponticus and others. Certainly we cannot know the unknowable, but we can be aware of it. Our awareness is broader than our intelligibility.

So speaking about the unknown Christ is legitimate, and I believe productive too, because it helps us penetrate (his) Mystery. This awareness creates a space of tolerance and also friendship without which no dialogue is possible, except the contraposition of two monologues. This is the spirit in which the pages of this book are written.

. . .

I am aware of the (historically justified) resistance many people feel when they hear the name of Christ, as though it were the monopoly of Christians, who for two thousand years have appropriated the name while it is not even of Christian origin. I was advised to replace it with another name to avoid misunderstandings, and I tried to do so, but I met with a threefold difficulty. Also, no one can have any monopoly on the sense of words as long as their meaning is explained. I would therefore like to enjoy that freedom. Many people would also like to eliminate the word “religion,” identified as it is with sectarian kinds of organizations. But the replacement term “spirituality” could be interpreted as pure ideology. Authentic human language is dialogical: we do not speak by ourselves.

¹ See Acts 17:23.

The following are the difficulties I encountered in the attempt to find another name to use instead of Christ—notwithstanding “micro-doxical” abuses.

a. It seems neither appropriate nor desirable to follow a fashion, albeit an ancient one, especially when the fashion in question has led to historical and tragic misunderstandings. In fact, the first disciples of Jesus overcame, almost despite themselves, the temptation of thinking they were purified Jews. That is why (not without hesitation and opposition) they abolished circumcision, which was the sacrament of YHWH’s covenant with his people. From the earliest centuries, this small group had the courage to call itself catholic—that is, universal—with the logical consequence that it could not be reduced to one doctrine, since there is no universal doctrine, as doctrine must always be based on determinate, not universal, postulates. This kind of monoculturalism is the premise of colonialism: the belief that a single doctrine can be universal. Faith is a human invariant, whereas beliefs are manifold.

b. I would be willing to use any other symbol provided it was not abstract like Truth, Justice or Love, and not solely or predominantly divine like Kṛṣṇa, the (divine) Mother, or others. An *avatāra*, for example, is divine, but with human likeness (docetism).

The great Christian revolution is the claim that Christ is *totally* Man and *fully* God—a claim that makes no sense outside of the Trinity (this dogma, for reasons of power and efficiency, was kept in the shadows for centuries).

Perhaps I could have found a “homeomorphic equivalent” in ancient Egypt or in some other mythology from the American continent, but these relations have a much more limited range and it would be artificial to put them forward as symbols for our age.

c. As I shall later repeat, if Jesus is the Christ (for Christians), then Christ as *logos* is not reducible to his incarnation in Jesus, who definitely was not “before Abraham was” and could not have said that whatever we do or fail to do to others we do to Him. Christ is a (real) symbol of the theandric nature of Man—that is, of the fully divine (or divinized, if we prefer) and totally human Man.²

Based on these premises, we cannot say that it is “colonialist” to speak of Christ as a universal symbol, knowing he can be called by various names according to the different religions. In fact, I believe these pages lead us to an *ecumenical ecumenism* that does not lose its pragmatic human nature when recognized as universal. In this sense the Man-God seems to me a suitable symbol, without specifying the actual meaning of the word “God.”

So we cannot say there are many Christs. Christ is unique; it is the name Christians have given to the (divine) Man that other traditions can recognize in other symbols and therefore with different attributes.

Another name that could also be equivalent (homeomorphic) to the name of Christ, and less controversial, would be that of Spirit, inasmuch as the Spirit is present in every authentic religiosity; but we should then have to add *incarnate* Spirit—in every divinized person.

I am aware that this work contains *in nuce* a vision of theology which I believe belongs to our millennium and which can only be outlined with great humility. One thing, however, seems certain: we cannot simply live off the past, and the *kairos* of our time requires us to overcome old and obsolete frameworks. The Spirit makes all things new by completely renewing the face of the earth (Rev 21:5 and Ps 104:30).

* * *

This introduction serves as the prologue to a vital and urgent issue of our time: *harmony* (and not unity) among religions, which is necessary for a human peace that is not founded

² The word *logos* is applied to Christ by John, surely influenced by the Greek world (and not only the Greek).

on the forced renunciation of people's convictions but on the recognition that none of us is the sole source of truth—as though those who do not think like us were in error.

I owe my gratitude to those who have contributed in one way or another to this new edition and particularly to Julien Ries, to whom I am indebted not only for having written the preface to this edition but also for having shown my works to Jaca Book.

Tavertet

Easter 2007

PREFACE TO THE 1979 EDITION

*ved'āham samatītāni vartamāni c'ārjuna,
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṇi tu veda na kaścana.*

*I know, O Arjuna, the beings
of the past, the present and the future,
but no one knows me.*

BG VII.26

*πότε δέ εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν,
ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν*

*When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome,
lacking clothes and clothe you?*

Mt 25:38

There has always been a fellow traveler in my journeys through the different lands of Man. A child of my own time and environment, I thought I knew this companion (Christ), who was beside me for half a century in my intellectual intuitions and spiritual wanderings. But then came the critical moment when, at the culmination of my life, I reached my ancestral dwelling-place—and my companion disappeared. I had often preached about the pilgrims of Emmaus, and now I had reached my own village; but instead of returning to the City of Peace (Jerusalem) to seek and perhaps find my partner again, I proceeded, alone, on the path to a Battlefield (*kurukṣetra*, BG I.1) ravaged by fratricidal struggles between the different religious traditions to which I belonged. Disturbed and afflicted, I refused to take a stand for either of the parties. The black pieces wanted to enlist me as a warrior in the Field of Righteousness (*dharmakṣetra*, BG I.1), while the whites (Ārjuna) wanted me to be a brahman in favor of what seemed to me an unjust status quo. On both sides were my friends and family, so I remained a conscientious objector, arousing the suspicions of both. It was then that a third great Symbol in the form of Compassion (*karuṇa*) took hold of me. Risking my life by offering my services to all without accepting their respective dialectics, I suddenly found myself in the World of Time (secularity). The sacredness of everything, even of the secular, began to shine like a new dawn in front of me. I had arrived at the confluence (*sangam*) of the four rivers: the Hindū, the Christian, the Buddhist, and the secular. This book relates part of the adventure.

In this time of rapid social and individual change, why a new edition of a book written more than half a century ago? Because of a personal problem of conscience. I say "personal" here not in the sense of a particular individual, but in relation with my world. The most positive way to overcome a tradition is not to step out of it as from any kind of association, but to live the tradition more deeply, to "transmit it," and thus transform it, to climb to the top where other peaks are visible and descend to the depths where the heartbeat of the world can be felt. I can only be free from a certain kind of Christianity or Hinduism (and the same goes for a certain kind of Buddhism or secularism) if I try to become a better Christian and a better Hindū, a better Buddhist and a better citizen of the world. If one writes a book with one's life and pays for it with one's blood, if intellectual activity is rooted more in life fully lived and experience suffered than in mere mental production, then what I have written is part of what I was, and what I was cannot be erased. It would be useless to try to repudiate it, but it can be transcended. Life is metabolism.

Our age of great acceleration and impatience produces ruptures, violent reactions, and sudden revolutions. Within Christianity we already find extreme attitudes that fall into the very same error, albeit in the opposite direction, that they are trying to correct: if God was previously to the right, he is now to the far left; if Christ was a divine idol, now he is nothing more than a revolutionary Jew. Within Hinduism there are similar reactions: if rituals were once the foundation of life for most Hindūs, now they are mostly ignored; if there was once religious inflation, now there is spiritual starvation, and so forth.

This, then, is my problem of conscience: many people, in both East and West, have gone through a similar process and have altogether abandoned "religion" (or a particular religion) or have turned to the "scientific" study of religion. The young generations also, again both East and West, seem to adopt these extremes, completely rejecting their traditions or else joining cults and sects of a sacred or profane nature. It is to be hoped that this new edition may offer an example of transformation without total rupture and of continuity that is not mere prolongation. Offering my personal alternative in response to the dilemma of many seemed to me a moral imperative sufficient to justify turning from other tasks and duties in order to revise this edition.

I have been guided by three principles: (1) to make explicit what was written too cryptically in previous editions, (2) to preserve everything that I still believe to be valid, and (3) to refrain from changing the text completely according to my present vision (as this would have meant writing a new book).

The prefaces written for various translations from 1957 to 1976 have been reorganized so as to form the first part of the Introduction. The second part is based on notes accumulated over the years as reactions (my own and other people's) to the text. The bibliography has been updated, and the addition of footnotes is further evidence of revision.

My wish is that, just as the first edition of 1964 (although the book itself was written ten years before that) contributed to a more critical Christian self-understanding at a crucial time in history, this revised version may offer a new step toward a fuller understanding of our itinerant state. It invites the reader to a contemplative vision of the Mystery that can only be named in the vocative and whose name is a Superscript engraved on pure crystal that can only shine in the crypt of the heart—and of the World.

Santa Barbara

Easter 1979

INTRODUCTION

*naiva vācā na manasā prāptum śakyo na cakṣuṣā
astīti bruvato' nyatra kathaṃ tadupalabhyate*

*Not by speech, not by mind,
not by sight can he ever be reached.
How then can he be perceived
if not by exclaiming "He is"?*

KathU VI.12

*ὅς ἐν ταῖς παρωχημέναις γενεαῖς εἶασεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη
πορεύεσθαι ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν. Καί τοι
οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον αὐτὸν ἀφῆκεν*

*In the past he allowed all the nations
to go their own way;
but even then he did not leave you without
evidence of himself.*

Acts 14:16–17

TRADITUM

The Legacy of the Past

"At many moments in the past and by many means, God *spoke* (ἐλάλησεν) to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, the final days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages."¹ From this we may deduce that the Son inspired not only the prophets of Israel but also the sages of Hinduism, and that he has been present in all the endeavors of Man, because "sustaining all things by his powerful command (τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως)"² he has never forsaken the World. We also believe that the *logos* himself has spoken in that religion which, for thousands of years, has led and inspired hundreds of millions of people. The *logos*, *vāc*, is the firstborn of the Truth³ and was from the Beginning.⁴ It seems obvious that the *logos*, which was in the Beginning and was later incarnated in time, cannot be identified with Jesus of Nazareth without some qualifications, as I have tried to explain elsewhere.⁵ Jesus is the Christ, but the Christ cannot be identified totally with the son of Mary. It is abstract thought that leads us to believe that if A is B, then B is also A. But neither Jesus nor Christ is an algorithm. Reality cannot be conceptualized without a prior abstraction. Those who believe Jesus is the Christ are Christians, but Christ was before Abraham.

We have repeated this excursus in order to eliminate right from the start any suspicion that, when speaking of Christ, we want to make an apology for Christianity as a particular religion. Although the name of Christ (which is not of Christian origin) was later adopted by Christians, it seems to be a complete symbol of reality, which elsewhere I have called *cosmotheandric*.⁶

Modern individualism identifies the individual with the person. Jesus is a person and not only an individual, although they cannot be separated. Distinction (which is necessary to thought) is not equivalent to separation—as we see in the Trinity.

The present study does not claim to unveil the Mystery (how could it?) or to dictate the language that the believer in Christ must use, since only the Holy Spirit inspires the words

¹ Heb 1:1–2. This Son is singular, but he is not an individual in the modern sense.

² Heb 1:3.

³ See *TB* II.8.8.5; *RI* I.164.37. Most of the texts referred to have been translated in R. Panikkar 2001/20.

⁴ See *TMB* XX.14.2: "This [in the beginning] was the only Lord of the Universe. His word was with him. This word was his second. He contemplated. He said: I shall deliver this word so that it will produce and bring into being all this world." See also *BU* I.2.4–5; I.3.21.

⁵ See R. Panikkar 1999/6.

⁶ See R. Panikkar 2004/L11.

of his living witnesses, and He tells us not to think first of what we are to say or how to say it.⁷ In this work I propose to examine just a few ideas regarding three particular aspects of the subject.

Let us repeat, to avoid any misunderstanding, that Jesus is, but does not exhaust, the Christ.

The first introductory chapter deals with the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity at the ontological and existential level, and aims to show that the living presence of the Mystery Christians call Christ is found in Hinduism. Now Presence does not necessarily imply a historical presence. Christians should have no difficulty in admitting this, as they recognize the same truth in the Eucharist, which celebrates Christ's real presence without identifying it with his historical reality. When they receive the Eucharist, Christians are not eating the proteins of Jesus. The Western world is, by and large, influenced by an overvaluation of history, almost as though historicity were the sole component of reality.

Christians in general nurture the idea that Christ will come at the end of time and that many religions look to Him whom all the peoples await.⁸ This idea, however, should not overshadow the complementary and, in a sense, prior truth that Christ is not only at the end but also at the beginning. He is not only the omega of all things, but also the alpha.⁹ Christ, from a Christian point of view, is not only the ontological goal of Hinduism but also its true inspirer, and his grace is the guiding, though hidden, force impelling Hinduism toward its full identity.¹⁰

I am aware of the fact that today there are many who feel rather allergic to the name of Christ, which has been monopolized and abused by the economic, political, and cultural colonialism practiced by the West and into which Christianity allowed itself to be drawn. Indeed, this colonialism is still going on. However, I fear that solving the problem by not using the name would only make matters worse, since we cannot reduce religion (religiosity), which is a constitutive element of the human being, to a sect. What would seem to be required is to identify the "homeomorphic equivalents" of this name in other religions, as we shall see later. In every religion there is a symbol (either singular or plural) which acts as a "mediator" between human finiteness and the Mystery that surrounds us. But the words are always bound by a particular language.

Some years ago, when I first timidly suggested making a distinction between Christ and the Lord, there were some whose dependence on the individualist mentality caused them to protest. In any case, as this book is focused more on Christianity as a human religiosity, the name of Christ will continue to be used as a symbol of authentic human religiosity—without confusing it with or separating it from Jesus of Nazareth. Man needs concrete symbols, and "Lord" is too generic a name.

Christ, the Lord, is therefore the Principle that spoke to Men and was already at work before Abraham.¹¹ He was present in the stone that Moses struck with incredulity,¹² and he acted through Moses when he chose to share the life of his people.¹³ He may have been

⁷ See Mt 10:19–20.

⁸ See Gen 49:10; Isa 2:2; 11:10; 42:4; 49:6; 55:5; 60:3–5; Lk 2:30–32; Mt 12:21; Rom 15:12, etc. It is well known that similar prophecies are found in many other world religions: the One who is to come, the Center, the Symbol.

⁹ See Rev 1:8; 21:6, etc.

¹⁰ See Jn 1:1, 9–10; Heb 1:2–3, etc.

¹¹ See Jn 8:25, although the text is open to various translations. See also Jn 8:58.

¹² See 1 Cor 10:4; Exod 17:6; Ps 18:2, etc.

¹³ See Heb 11:24–26. Although "Christ" here may mean the Anointed, the author of Hebrews undoubtedly meant Christ.

called by many names, but his presence and action were always there. The encounter is not an ideological one, but takes place in the deepest recess of reality in what many traditions call the Mystery.

The second chapter of this study deals with the complementary question of the doctrinal relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. This means not that we are comparing the two doctrines, but that we are trying to discern what the Christian attitude should be toward Hinduism.

Hinduism considers itself a fully fledged, legitimate, and valid religion. Now Christianity, as the presence of Christ, defines itself as catholic, meaning complete and universal. In fact, Christianity lived from within does not consider itself *one* religion among others, or indeed as *una inter pares*.

Christianity is convinced that it bears a message of total salvation for Man and thus sees itself as the fullness of all religions and the perfection of every religion. The relationship of Christians, insofar as they are truly Christian, to other religions is not one of simple juxtaposition or total rejection or absolute dominance; it is a *sui generis* relationship, which we shall try to describe in the particular case of Hinduism.

Today I would draw a clearer distinction, but not separation, between Christianity and Christ. Religions are usually classified according to their doctrinal content, and Christian doctrine, even in its grandest elements, is not original. In the final analysis, every genuine religion, leaving aside its doctrines, is a witness to the reality of the Mystery (to put it succinctly): a witness to the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Transcendent together with the Immanent, to our own ignorance, our destiny, and so on. One feature of Christianity is its explicit reference (the implicit reference is almost universal) to a superhuman, and at the same time deeply human, reality: to the One who is symbolized by the word Christ—true God and true Man, as Christian language has it. And Christ, we must insist, is not the monopoly of Christians; in fact, we could perhaps apply what Jesus said to his people, that true religiosity has no boundaries.¹⁴ We are proposing to illustrate an analogous relationship—that of Hinduism to Christianity—but as it lies beyond the scope of this study to develop the idea, we must limit ourselves to a simple mention. It should, however, be clear from the very beginning that not only does the Christian attitude not contradict the corresponding Hindū attitude, but it reveals it in a homeomorphic way,¹⁵ since if we really love, we must allow ourselves to be loved, just as if we want to communicate the best we have, and indeed if we want to convert, then we must allow others to communicate their best to us, and even perhaps convert us.

The differences between the two religions, however, are very often complementary. To put it succinctly, if Hinduism claims to be the *religion of truth*, Christianity claims to be the *truth of religion*. Hinduism is ready to absorb any authentic religious truth; Christianity is ready to embrace any authentic religious value. The genuinely Christian attitude is to “bring out” the “truth” of Hinduism without destroying its identity. To Christianity, Hinduism in turn offers the authentically Hindū gift of a new experience and interpretation—a new dimension, in fact—of the Mystery. The “catholicity” of Hinduism brings out the true catholicity of Christianity, while the truth of Christianity brings out the truth of Hinduism. The passage from a narrow Catholicism and an exclusive “truth” to a full Catholicism and to the recognition of the fact that Truth can be neither limited nor monopolized is the paschal

¹⁴ See Mt 8:11, etc.

¹⁵ By *homeomorphism* we mean the “topologically” corresponding (analogous) function (a functional equivalent) within another setting, Hinduism in this case. See R. Panikkar 1999/XXVI, p. xxii.

experience of every religion. A growing Christianity is also a Christianity moving toward greater fullness. This death and resurrection are the mystery of the cross.¹⁶

These thoughts should not be misunderstood. Christianity can be experienced in two ways: either as a religion (in which case it cannot claim to be of a different *nature* from the other religions), or as a concrete and ultimate experience of the Mystery that is revealed in a faith which will then be called Christian. That is to say, Christianity may be seen as an incarnation of faith or as a particular belief. This would apply equally, *mutatis mutandis*, to Hinduism: it may be lived either simply as one religion among others or as a concrete and dynamic expression of the ultimate Mystery, through which one may reach the transcendent totality that embraces everything. We can say, therefore, that Hinduism may be seen as an incarnation of faith.

What we are saying, in other words, is that the mystical experience of any religion and which underlies any doctrinal formulation is not identified with any *nama-rupa*, with any name or any form, even though the expression of the same experience, and the belief, has need of our cultural, and therefore nonuniversal, categories.¹⁷

It should therefore be clear that when we speak of Hindū or Christian faith, we are not referring to a rivalry between two religious beliefs, but to a relationship between the deep faith of the followers of the Indic tradition and a faith that Christians can only call "Christian." This is why the title of the second part is "Hinduism and Christianity," despite the ambivalence of the expression. We should also stress once again that throughout this book the adjective "Christian" does not denote a monopoly of prerogatives reserved for the adepts of "Christianity" but indicates everything that concerns the richness of that reality which belongs to all, and for which Christians, who are only partially aware of the fact, use the concrete name of Christ.

The great danger today in the study of the encounter of religions lies either in eliminating all differences for the sake of reaching understanding, or in basing such understanding on a minimalist structure that then proves incapable of sustaining any religious life and falls into sterile syncretism. Both cases preclude any true religious encounter. Certainly there are different symbols and different names. We have various options, which tend to swing between two extremes: (a) our symbols are the best and are unique, while the others are inadequate or even wrong; and (b) any group of symbols and names is mutually incommensurable, even if it is satisfactory for the particular group that professes them. The first extreme can easily lead to fanaticism, and the second to an agnostic relativism. The hypothesis of this book is that the power of the symbol can be so broadened and deepened that—even though fundamentally and directly meaningful in the environment in which it originated—it opens us to experiences and realities that are not (yet) present in the actual symbol. In our present age, if the Christ-symbol were valid only for Christians it would cease to be a living symbol even for the Christians themselves, or at least for all those for whom Christianity still means Catholic religiosity.

The same can be said for Hindū symbols. To want to keep Hinduism within the ethnic, geographical, and cultural limits of an ancient and immutable tradition would not do justice to the profound insights of the *sanātana dharma*. Although Hinduism is more flexible in its doctrine than post-Tridentine Christianity, sociologically and culturally it is equally resistant to changes that are not satisfactorily explained.

¹⁶ See R. Panikkar 2006/18.

¹⁷ Faith as openness to the Mystery is universal; beliefs are particular—as I have tried to explain elsewhere.

Although the name of Christ seems sectarian to some because of the abuses and misunderstandings attached to the name itself, as we have seen, many would have no objection if we said the same things with reference to God. But even God is not a universal hypothesis. Others would prefer to speak of an omnipresent Spirit that unites us without distinction. But then we would not reach any conclusion. The problem is actually our language—though not in a nominalist sense. I am reminded of the reaction of the members of an African tribe when they were accused of being polytheists. They replied that the One and only God, supreme creator of the universe in which we all live, causes no trouble and asks for nothing, whereas the different Gods, who mainly preside over our various human activities, require worship, acts of propitiation, adoration, and so forth. Just as there is a particular link between God and the Gods, so also there is a subtle relation between the concrete name (whether it be *Kṛṣṇa* or Justice or Love) that we use to express the cosmotheandric mystery and the Reality itself that has no proper name. This use of different names, however, is not without its consequences. We may agree that we all "mean" the "same" thing, albeit from different angles, but this is not convincing: first, because the relationship between the name and the named is in this instance deeper than that which exists between a material thing and its nominalistic label. Certainly, the name is not the thing, but our means of referring to "things" is the word, and the Kantian "thing in itself," detached from a name, does not exist. There is also a second and more important reason: the sphere of religion is not the realm of pure intentions, big decisions, and high ideals, but of the joys and pains of daily life, of dull routine in the concrete interaction between men. If we speak of the encounter between religions we cannot retreat to our ivory towers or hide in deep caves: the place of the encounter is rather the bazaar, the marketplace, the *civitas*, and the fields.

The third part of this book deals with the concrete example of a Vedantic belief and a Christian dogma. It endeavors to show, in one particular case, what could well be shown in many others: the presence of a religious truth within more than one religion, and how this intuition can be mutually enriching. Now, when a religious truth is recognized by different parties and thus belongs to more than one tradition, it will be named in each case according to the vocabulary of the particular tradition recognizing it. If Christians, convinced of the truth of their own religion, recognize a truth outside it, they will be inclined to say that a "Christian" truth has been discovered there. In this sense the third part of this book will discover a "Christian" truth in the Hindū tradition. Similarly, when a Hindū discovers a positive value outside his own religion, he will either try to incorporate it without any concerns over copyright or recognize that it was already present, albeit latently, in his own tradition.

. . .

The language of this study has to be understood from its *substrate*, and with reference to its *goal*.

Its *substrate* is composed, on the one hand, of the broad scenario of world religions, especially the rich world of Hinduism and, on the other hand, by the problem concerning philosophical questions in general and Christian theology in particular.

The *goal* of this study is not to achieve consensus at the expense of fundamental Christian or Hindū principles. On the contrary, it is an attempt to arrive at a certain understanding without renouncing any of the specifically Christian or Hindū principles. On the contrary, it is an attempt to reach a certain understanding without giving up any of the fundamental truths of Christianity or Hinduism. This perspective tries not to make the Christian position unnecessarily difficult or complicated, or the Hindū outlook too exotic or unfairly sectarian. The truths that Christian doctrine, on the one hand, and Hindū doctrine, on the other,

present as universal have often come to be thought of as narrow or limited (if not fanatical) points of view, whereas in reality they are both formulations, necessarily limited by cultural factors, of a more universal truth.

This book aims to deepen Christian understanding by revealing other dimensions of the mystery of Christ, so its title could equally have been "The Unknown Christ of Christianity."¹⁸ The author is coming to realize more and more not only that God is a "hidden God,"¹⁹ but also that the hidden life of Christ on earth has remained such for two thousand years.²⁰ The kingdom of God suffers violence²¹ precisely because, although it is within us,²² it is unknown to us.

I would like here to quote the words of an ancient Christian saint:

As the physical eye sees written letters and has knowledge from them . . . so the mind, if it is purified, looks up to God and receives divine knowledge from Him. Instead of a book it has the Spirit, instead of a pen, thought and tongue: "my tongue is the pen," says the Psalm (45:1); instead of ink there is light. Plunging thought into light . . . the mind, guided by the Spirit, traces words in the pure hearts of those who listen. Then it shall understand the words: "They will all be taught by God." (John 6:45)²³

I would venture to add that Christ will never be completely known on earth because that would amount to seeing the Father,²⁴ whom nobody has seen.²⁵ It was a good thing that Christ disappeared;²⁶ otherwise men would have made him a king²⁷ or a God,²⁸ as has often happened. As for the reason why I still insist on speaking of Christ, I need only quote a mystic who lived in a century in which this phrase might have sounded even stranger than it does today: "A true Christian, reborn in the spirit of Christ, is in the simplicity of Christ and has no strife or contention with any man about religion."²⁹

. . .

Because introductions are generally written as postscripts, it seems to me that the following considerations, written for the latest Italian translation, still have some validity.

The Gospel injunction not to put "new wine in old skins" is more than a simple call for prudence.³⁰ It means, at least to me, that life with its constant novelty cannot be constrained in old frameworks, and its changes cannot be evaluated with obsolete measures. But it also means that content and form, though different, cannot be separated, so that any content unable to create its own form, as it were, would be a kind of existential lie, just as any form

¹⁸ See Th. Ohm (1961), p. 306.

¹⁹ See Isa 45:15; *KathU* II.12; *MundU* II.2; *SU* III.7.11; VI.11, etc.

²⁰ See Jn 7:3-5; Col 3:3, etc.

²¹ See Mt 11:12; *BG* II.37-38.

²² See Lk 17:21; *SU* VI.11-12; *CU* III.13.7; VIII.3.2-3, etc.

²³ Gregory of Sinai (1951), p. 42.

²⁴ See Jn 14:9.

²⁵ See Jn 1:18.

²⁶ See Jn 16:7 and my comment in R. Panikkar 1999/XXVI, pp. 157-72.

²⁷ See Jn 6:15.

²⁸ See Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19; Mt 19:17.

²⁹ J. Bohme s.d., p. 1.

³⁰ See Mt 9:17.

that expresses content other than its own becomes pure and simple hypocrisy. The truth, St. Augustine said, is *sine ulla dissimilitudine*.

Nevertheless, if people feel the need for a new wine (or a better one)—that is, if life is change and movement—there will be a certain tension or polarity between container and content, symbol and reality, *nāma-rūpa* and *avyakta*. Indeed, a living content, despite the fact that it depends for intelligibility on its form, will eventually have to break this form. What appears to be a *vicious* circle is in fact a *vital* circle. As the *Letter to Diognetus* said long ago in another context, it is not so much the body that contains the soul as the soul that contains the body.³¹

Have we not observed all too often how the spirit is suffocated when it is imprisoned or how an ideal is impoverished when it is formulated in logical terms? Or how the message of a prophet is diminished when his vision is transferred to the written page, or a heartfelt call for reform transformed into organizations (however necessary they may be)? Are not books, even sacred books, just another form of institution? Yet is it possible to do without them?

When I began to write down the ideas expressed in this book, I had already lived them in various ways, which, though happy to recall, I need not now describe. But when I began to formulate these intuitions (which I was almost compelled to do), my experiences had to be poured into "old skins," simply because there was nothing else available, either for me or for the reader I was addressing. No wonder, then, that they burst the old skins and spilled the new wine.

Since I started writing this book, I have done my best to produce new "must" and procure "new skins," but the human winegrower and the earthen containers remain more or less the same. The process may have been modified and the results may be more accurate, more suited to our times, but the grapes are still ripened by the same sun.

Even now I am unable to provide new skins into which the reader could pour new wine in due course. The new skins are produced at the same rate as the must ferments into new wine. This venture of discovering or perhaps even creating new forms of human awareness (and corresponding new forms of religiosity) requires an intense collaboration.

The only thing I can do here is to point out some features belonging to both the container and the contents. Pursuing the metaphor, I would like, with regard to the skins, to take into consideration the *origin* of the leather (my original reader) and the *method* of tanning (the model of intelligibility that is emerging today in relation to this type of problem). As far as content is concerned, I would like to consider two wines of this new vintage: the meaning of *catholicity* and the meaning of *identity*.

Let me explain these four points briefly. The first two are "formal" and they refer to structure, while the second two refer to content.

The first point (a) is sociological, since it concerns both the cultural environment of the persons I was writing for and also to a certain extent my own situation. The second (b) is epistemological and concerns the theory that underlies understanding. The third (c) is theological, and deals with the problem of the universality of religions. The fourth (d) is philosophical, and addresses the problem of one's own personal identity.

a. *The sociological point.* Although I wanted to help Christians as well as Hindūs reach better mutual understanding, I ended up using predominantly Christian terminology. I wanted, in fact, to show Christians that the ideas in this book do not dilute the Christian

³¹ "Inclusa quidem est anima corpore, sed ipsa continet corpus . . ." (*Letter to Diognetus* VI).

message and do not elude the "folly of the cross" or avoid the Christian "scandal."³² On the contrary, I maintained that to claim an exhaustive knowledge of the mystery of Christ is to empty the cross of its power. But I am still convinced that we must abandon the "old skins" so as to enable Christians to keep their own identity intact, but also to open them up to the understanding and insights of others without misunderstanding or insulting them, as often happens, with an intolerable attitude of superiority. In short, I tried to show there is a way to accept the message of Christ in its entirety without sweetening or absolutizing it, and still remain open toward others, ready to accept them without condescension or inclusivism.

I wanted above all to say that the truth we can honestly defend as universally valid, the truth that really sets us free, is an existential truth and not mere doctrine.³³ Thus, I also maintained that the true meaning of orthodoxy does not consist in a purely objective interpretation, or in a *recta doxa* taken as doctrine, but in an "authentic glory" and in a "considered opinion" (both synonyms of the word *doxa*), in something closer to an orthopraxis than to correct doctrinal assertions, however true these may be in their own domain.³⁴

This Christian perspective, nevertheless, has sometimes given—especially to Hindūs—the impression that I was being "too Christian" and thus ultimately "unfair," though sympathetic, toward Hinduism, that I had not overcome my innate sense of Christian superiority, and that if indeed there were "dangerous" Christians today, they were not the missionaries of the "old school," but the more subtle ones like myself who would, to put it simply, suck out the lifeblood of the Hindū *dharma* in order to neutralize its vitality.

But it is not sufficient to assert that this was not my intention, as that would only confirm the suspicion that an attitude of superiority was so rooted in Christian thought that it could not be eliminated even by an approach as open and sympathetic as mine. I do not deny that my convictions deepened since then, but it has always been in the same direction and I have to stress that the relationship between the two religious traditions, Christian and Hindū, is not one of assimilation or antagonism, or of the substitution of one with the other, but one of *mutual fecundation*. What I do admit, however, is that I have sometimes used language that has perhaps been ambivalent or even cryptic, as for example in the Preface to the first edition where I wrote that "the book" on Christ already existed, without making it clear that I was not referring to the Bible, but to the *śruti*—that is, to the Vedic and other Hindū "revelations."

Now, after this sincere clarification, I can add that in practically all my writings, except perhaps my scientific papers, I have made use of linguistic polyvalence. Reality in fact has many degrees, and consequently may be expressed at various levels of meaning. Words, when they are not merely algebraic signs (which I call "terms"), have an integral polyvalence that depends not only on various possible contexts but also on the very nature of the reality they express. My "wineskins" were nevertheless made of Christian leather. Should I now write another book for Hindūs? Have I put too much trust in Hinduism or relied on its tolerance to such an extent that I have failed to present the Hindū position adequately? Certainly I am not setting out to transform this book into something that was never intended, and this for two reasons: in the first place, I have attempted that elsewhere, and in the second place, there would be no reason to do so, as I believe the concern of Hinduism today is not so much to defend its own orthodoxy as to address the present *kalpa* or eon without damaging the human *karman*. In fact I would say that the problem of the existence of other creeds has

³² See 1 Cor 1:18–23.

³³ See the chapter "The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," in R. Panikkar 1966/XII, pp. 241–90.

³⁴ See the reflections on form in H. U. Von Balthasar 1990, under the general heading of "Glory."

never been an *essential* one for Hinduism. Hinduism may make a claim of superiority, but it is not exclusivist.

b. The *epistemological* point concerns the process for tanning the hides for the wineskins, which has adopted a fundamentally Western method. The principle of noncontradiction served as the "tannic acid," and my intention was to show that even if Christ were not the monopoly of Christians, nothing would be lost of his vitality and truth. The Christian wine is independent of the wineskins used thus far. The kingdom of God does not manifest itself when and where we look for it; in fact, as the Latin Vulgate says, *non venit regnum Dei cum observatione*,³⁵ or the kingdom is not visibly noticeable, nor is Christ himself always recognizable.³⁶ The problem of identification by differentiation, which I have addressed elsewhere, is typical of Western Christianity and gives rise to issues of its own. For Hinduism, on the other hand, there is no great problem. The identity of *brahman* cannot be reached through its identification by distinction. *Brahman* does not exist through its being distinct and separate from anything else (the Transcendent, *das ganz Andere*), but through its inseparability from everything that is (the Immanent). Hindus could accept being considered "anonymous Christians,"³⁷ although this expression makes little sense in a tradition that has taken polyonymy for granted ever since the famous Rig Vedic saying, "One is he whom the sages call by many names."³⁸ It is no great wonder, then, that in discussing a Western problem I have used Western categories. Reducing the epistemological problem to its bare essentials, I have tried to show in this book, as I have already said, that the Christian affirmation "Jesus is the Christ" is not identical to "the Christ is Jesus." Similarly, I have maintained that the assertion "Christ is the Lord" cannot simply be inverted. It is not necessary, in fact, that the Lord be called Christ or recognized by that title, because the salvific name of Christ is a super-name, above every name.³⁹

It is part of the Christian kerygma to affirm that "Jesus is the Christ" and that "Christ is the Lord." The Christ is "more" (and not less) than Jesus of Nazareth. A Christian maintains, moreover, that the statements "Jesus is not the Christ" and "Jesus is not the Lord" go against Christian faith and are incompatible with it. But the Christian cannot say that "Christ is only Jesus" because, in fact, the risen Jesus is more than Jesus of Nazareth, which is only his practical *identification*, as distinct from his personal *identity*. Neither can he say, "The Lord is only Christ," because his knowledge of the Lord is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, there are not many Christs, nor are there many Lords. On the contrary, and this is the central argument of this book: the Lord exists even though his name may not be formulated as "Christ." The present work deals with this delicate transplantation.

It is a delicate operation because for thirty centuries Western thought has ontologized law, and with it the principle of property (which implies a certain exclusivity) through which a social order is undoubtedly achieved. It is not a case of destroying a myth but of relativizing it. To put it succinctly, Christ does not belong only to Christians.

Every believer sees their tradition from within, so that for the believer it becomes a symbol of all that is true. Hence, if we find some truth "outside," we are led to conclude that we can participate in that "external" truth, either by incorporating it more or less directly into our

³⁵ Lk 17:20.

³⁶ See Lk 24:16; Jn 20:14, etc.

³⁷ See K. Rahner 1962, pp. 136–58, and 1956, pp. 545–54.

³⁸ See *RV* I.164.46.

³⁹ See R. Panikkar 1972/10, pp. 195–218.

own religiosity or by recognizing that it is already present in our religion, albeit in another form. This is the *pars pro toto* syndrome that I have dealt with elsewhere.

A predominantly analytic mind may have some difficulty in accepting assertions to the effect that one can be Hindū and also Christian or vice versa, because such a mentality would give these words a restrictive and exclusive meaning: "whatever a Christian may be, one cannot say he is a Hindū." Here, dialectical thought identifies Christian with non-Hindū and Hindū with non-Christian. Thus, when I maintain that Christ is real and active, although hidden and unknown, in Hinduism, I presumably violate the "sacred" Western canons used to identify Christ, since Christ is seen only in terms of *differentiating identification* rather than in terms of *identifying identity*.⁴⁰

This is also a semantic problem, and here I must confess that I have not always made the necessary clarifications and distinctions. When writing "Christianity" or "Hinduism," for instance, I should have distinguished more clearly: (1) between the social and *historical expression* of these religions—that is, Christianity as an affiliation to a particular church, or Hinduism to a particular school, a particular *sampradāya*, or way of religious life; (2) the core of a given religion, which does not consist simply in its sociological manifestation but in a *faith commitment* that is personified in sacramental or sacred structures that abide through cultural and temporal fluctuations; and (3) the *divine mystery*, whatever name we may want to give it, singular or plural, and whatever degree of reality we may wish to grant it.

Now when comparing Christianity and Hinduism, as we are doing, we should carefully specify which of the three levels or aspects we are dealing with. Undoubtedly the three are intertwined, so that a believer may accept the sociological level, for example, simply because he believes it gives concrete expression to the higher level; but when we cross the boundaries of a religious tradition we cannot ignore such distinctions. A non-Hindū, for example, who views the caste system or the negation of Gods as simply sociological problems misses the essential point, as does a non-Christian who sees the Eucharist as just a light meal. Obviously, we cannot compare canon law with the Upanishads, or the present-day caste system with the Sermon on the Mount, or the Crusades with Advaita. But there is more to it than that: the interpretation of orthodoxy is itself related to time, so that the castes become relativized, and "transubstantiation" in the Christian field becomes susceptible to other interpretations.

c. The third point, regarding the nature of the "vineyard" itself, concerns the *theological* understanding of catholicity. The concept of catholicity has fluctuated with the political and historical conditions of the times. It is not surprising, therefore, that during the colonial and imperial period of the Christian West, the geographical expansion of the "Christian" nations was accompanied by the concept of catholicity as geographical universality. The Catholic religion was in fact considered to be a *universal* religion and thus had the right—even the duty—to spread throughout the entire world. Still, it is not necessary to recall the Greek origins of the word in order to understand that this geographic, extensive, and almost quantitative meaning was not and is not its only meaning. "Catholic," in fact, also and perhaps mainly, means complete—that is to say, a way of life, a religion, a complete revelation having within it all that is necessary to lead Man to his goal by bringing the human being to fulfillment without neglecting any aspect of human existence, and thus providing a way for Man to become what he is meant to be: *secundum totum*, in St. Augustine's faithful translation. In fact, "catholic" comes from the word *kath'holon*—according to totality—and its complete-

⁴⁰ See R. Panikkar 1975/12, pp. 141–66.

ness is more qualitative than quantitative.⁴¹ "Catholic," where religion is concerned, is the opposite of "sectarian," or "partisan," which underlines the *quality* and thus the uniqueness of this "religion." But a thing is unique precisely because it is not comparable. If it were comparable it would cease to be unique; it would be more or less similar to another, not existentially unique.

Our *theologumenon*, then, was that the catholicity of Christianity does not necessarily have to be interpreted in geographical or doctrinal terms. In fact, the modern emphasis on local churches, the mystical comprehension of the sacramental core of Christianity, as well as religious pluralism, conspire to make the acceptance of this second meaning almost a matter of course. In a certain sense, there is no abstract catholic religion; but on the other hand, the true and authentic religiosity of every person is catholic: it enables them to reach their fullness.

The same thing could be said about Hinduism. The Hindū concept of universal *dharma* is not a geographical idea. Religious historians sometimes struggle to understand the existential character of Hinduism, which, though it may not be strictly ethnic or historical, is tied to the peoples of India.⁴² Traditional Hinduism does not proselytize, because *dharma* (religion) is given to each person together with the free gift of existence. It is meaningless to want to change a person totally into something they are not—hence Hindū resistance to conversion as an existential change.

I am well aware that this point needs further elaboration, but I am also convinced that what I say does not dilute the claims of Christianity, nor does it weaken the Hindū position. Any encounter between religions can no longer follow in the wake of political events; on the contrary, such encounters can condition events. The days of Christian and Hindū empires are over; consequently, it is only right that the last vestiges of Christian "imperialism" disappear in order to allow emulation, complementarity, and mutual fecundation to emerge among religious traditions.

d. The last point, the *philosophical*, is that the must I have been trying to ferment in this book could be a new awareness of the *uniqueness* of Man, not only at a biological, historical, or political level, but also, and fundamentally, at the religious level. As long as the peoples of the world are not considered to be on the same existential level with respect to religion, there can be no firm base for human dignity. From this attitude there follows a disturbing corollary that leads some to ask whether religious outsiders (infidels, slaves, blacks, *mleccha*, *kafr*, *goy*, or simply damned) have a human soul or human rights. "Hell" would be an aberration if the damned were deemed to have the same rights as the elect. If religion for each of us is the epitome of relative human fulfillment (that is, what leads us to self-realization or salvation) and this perfection is what makes our being a person truly complete, then it will be all too logical that "extra ecclesiam nulla salus."⁴³ I am not saying that in order to avoid such an inhuman consequence as the reservation of human fullness (salvation) to a small

⁴¹ See the English word "whole."

⁴² See my chapter "Alcuni aspetti fenomenologici dell'odierna spiritualità Hindū," in R. Panikkar 1966/XII, pp. 3–32.

⁴³ "Outside the church there is no salvation." This opinion is not exclusive to Christians, but exists similarly in almost all religions and is consistent in spite of its possible "brutality" if interpreted as the exclusive privilege of one "club." There are, of course, many ways of getting around it: see C. Journet 1953; H. Kung 1967, pp. 67–122. My interpretation is to turn it around so as to affirm that the church is the place of salvation, wherever that place may be and however it may appear. See R. Panikkar, 1970/XIII, pp. 13ff. The church is *Sacramentum mundi* (Vatican II), which is the translation of the Greek τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ κόσμου—the Mystery of the cosmos.

minority there should only be one religion, or that all religions are equal, nor do I maintain that all human races and cultures are equal. Some are undoubtedly stronger, richer, and more beautiful according to one standard, while others are better according to another. I believe, nonetheless, that the equal dignity of all human beings as such cannot be logically upheld if we are not ready to accept the parity of all people with respect to the fundamental value of "humanity." Similarly, religions can differ among themselves, but if they are concerned with the dignity and destiny of Man, if they are different expressions of a constitutive human dimension, they are equal insofar as they are expressions of that same fundamental human religiosity. "Equal" does not mean equally good (or bad), but that they are capable of existentially addressing the ultimate human problems relating to our self-realization or salvation.

In any case we should not forget that the topic of equality, so fashionable today, is a purely abstract concept that presupposes the reduction of Man, who is essentially unique, to quantifiable parameters that are useful for defending democracy but do not represent real Man in his total reality. The dignity of Man is that he is unique and therefore incomparable.

A Christian, from a religious point of view, is no better or worse than a non-Christian. On the other hand, we should not tar everyone with the same brush. If, for a Christian, Christ is the ultimate symbol of human-divine and corporeal reality, and if the Christian really believes in the irreducible dignity of Man, then others too can share that symbol that he recognizes in Christ—even though the symbol may take different forms. A symbol is not a concept.

A similar argument can be applied to Hinduism. If there are karmic levels, then it is legitimate to believe that somebody may not be as advanced as you are on the path to *mokṣa*. But the path toward participation in the *parama gati* or highest goal must be open to any being in whom humanity is alive or potentially alive. The language is certainly different, since in Hinduism the conception of human individuality is not the same. Similarly, although the precepts of *dharma* have different connotations in Hinduism than in Christianity, the thrust toward peace undoubtedly pervades Hindū religiosity despite its recognition of different anthropological levels.

Here it would seem that one must renounce Christ or one's own symbol in order to remain completely faithful to it, or ultimately sacrifice God as some Christian mystics suggest. But then in what does identity consist? Only in differentiation? What makes one reality equal to another, and what differentiates them? Only the external parameters of space and time? Have we not perhaps transformed the variety of the world into dialectical differences and then wondered why we cannot find any convincing solution? Or, to return to our problem, in what does the *identity* of Christ consist? (Identity and not identification.)

In the course of this introduction I have subjected my book to an almost merciless critique. Let me say, however, that I have remained true to its title. Indeed, I speak not of a Christ known to Christianity and unknown to Hinduism, but rather of that unknown *reality* that Christians call Christ and that exists in the heart of Hinduism, not as a stranger to it but as its very *principle of life*, like the light that enlightens every Man who comes into the World.⁴⁴ A Christian master said, "All [that is] superior and all [that is] divine, precisely because it is superior and divine, is unknown, hidden, and veiled."⁴⁵ Therefore I remain faithful not only to the title of this book but also to the reality, to the Mystery, that is the Mystery that Christians call Christ. Most of the negative criticisms of this book come from a narrow, partial, or strictly historical point of view—in particular, from the microdoxical concept of

⁴⁴ See Jn 1:2.

⁴⁵ "Omne superior et omne divinum, in quantum huiusmodi, est incognitum, latens et absconditum" (Meister Eckhart).

that Mystery, forgetting that it is written, "Whoever believes in me believes not in me"⁴⁶ but in that Mystery that "no one has seen" and that the Christian tradition calls "Father"—that is, the "fons et origo totius Divinitatis"⁴⁷ as symbol of the origin of all reality; "I am the vine, you are the branches";⁴⁸ and as Nicholas of Cusa wrote in this regard, "[...] that the one humanity of Christ be in all Men, and his one spirit in all spirits; so that whatever is in him is in order that there be one Christ in all things."⁴⁹

A Christ who could not be present in Hinduism or a Christ who did not pitch his tent in the sun,⁵⁰ a Christ who did not represent the cosmotheandric reality with one Spirit seeing and re-creating all hearts and renewing the face of the earth,⁵¹ surely could not be my Christ; nor, I believe, could he be the true Christ of Christians.

Varanasi-Roma-Santa Barbara

1957-1976

⁴⁶ Jn 12:44.

⁴⁷ "Source and origin of all divinity"—an expression found in various councils of Toledo. See Denz-Schön. 2000, §525, etc.

⁴⁸ Jn 15:5.

⁴⁹ "... ut sit una Christi humanitas in omnibus hominibus, et unus Christi spiritus in omnibus spiritibus; ita ut quodlibet in eo sit, ut sit unus Christus ex omnibus" (*De docta ignorantia* 3.12).

⁵⁰ "Et posuit in sole tabernaculum suum [...]" (Ps 19:4).

⁵¹ See Ps 104:30.

TRADENDUM

The Challenge of the Present

Cuius vultum desiderat universa terra—"whose face the whole earth desires"—so sings the Latin Church at Christmas. Now this is the Face, of which the same Liturgy also sings, *Laetentur coeli et exultet terra ante faciem Domini, quoniam venit*—"let the Heavens rejoice and the Earth delight before the Face of the Lord, for he comes." Yet in much of Christian consciousness this Face has been objectified. This is one of the side effects of a pan-scientistic mentality and its invasion of extra-scientific realms. Once the face becomes a picture, the icon an idol, the encounter an idea, Christ an object, and reality a thought—once the *logos* subordinates the Spirit, to put it in traditional theological vocabulary—the dilemma becomes unavoidable: either give up the universality of Christ, for contemporary consciousness cannot accept a single ideology for the entire planet; or give up Christianity, for the very essence of Christian self-understanding is that Christ is the universal redeemer, the single mediator, the only-begotten of God.

The gist of this book is that the concreteness of Christ (over against his particularity) does not destroy his universality (over against his generality) because the reality of Christ is revealed in the personal experience of his uniqueness. This *experience* of the uniqueness of Christ, which is another name for Christian faith, cannot be rendered by the *concept* of uniqueness, which is only a purely formal notion. A concept comes to intelligibility by comparison and discussion. A concept of something that is both a class of its own and a no-class among classes is an impossible concept. Something is unique when it is irreducible, incomparable, and incommensurable to any other parameter of understanding. Uniqueness is neither one nor many. It transcends the classical opposition between monism and dualism. One or many saviors, one or many ways are meaningless phrases in the realm of any ultimate human experience. What I propose is both the traditional Advaitic solution and the equally traditional Christian answer: religious truth is existential and nonobjectifiable. But I would like to present the thesis without having to adopt either the Advaitic metaphysical or the Christian stance, though the endeavor cannot dispense with a certain spiritual or mystical insight into the nature of reality. Here the symbol of the face may be enlightening. A face is a real face when it is more—not less—than the physiognomy of the human head. It is a face when it is a face for me, with a uniqueness of its own. The face is concrete and not particular; it is that face only for me. It is meaningless to say that you have discovered "another" face in it. Each face includes your discovery of it. In both cases it is a face when it speaks, responds, and is alive with the life that flows also in me.

This is not a new thesis, but one that stresses a dimension that has been neglected in recent times. Could we say that there has been a "strategic" retreat in Christian theology?

A retreat from claiming to be the true, unique, and even absolute religion to being just another among many? Yes and no. Yes, insofar as many a Christian believer and theologian have sincerely believed Christianity to be true, unique, and absolute. No, however, insofar as that belief was a correct insight expressed in an inadequate and even false manner. The essence of this book is to show a possible middle way between totalitarian exclusivism and libertarian egalitarianism.

This study differs from many of the works that have appeared in recent times by reason of its "interior" character. It deals with more than phenomenology, with more than an "external" description of how religions should behave after so many centuries of mutual suspicion and misunderstanding. These approaches are legitimate and urgent, but the character of this book lies elsewhere. It is certainly not a devotional or pious work, and yet it emphasizes the interior and personal aspect of religion. It speaks to the bona fide *Hindū* and Christian who are no longer mutually unsympathetic, but who do not wish to dilute their own religiousness or to lose their own identity, in spite of being ready for openness and even change should such be required. There are ex-Catholics, ex-Marxists, ex-Buddhists, and so forth, but I know of no ex-mystic. Once the transformation due to an authentic mystical experience has happened, it is irreversible.

The thesis of this book is a mystical one. It can be expressed in different ways; it needs better and more accurate formulations, but the core remains. I do not say that it remains "the same": endurance is not the same thing as permanence, nor is continuity the same as conceptual identity.

The Christ of whom this book speaks is the living and loving reality of the truly believing Christian in whatever form the person may formulate or conceptualize this reality. No believer gives the existential and primal allegiance of his entire being to an idea or a formula, but to a reality that surpasses—not "denies" or "refuses," but "surpasses"—all understanding. And yet names and formulas are not without a bearing on reality itself.

The thesis of this book was and is that the Christian, in recognizing, believing in, and loving Christ as the central symbol of Life and Ultimate Truth, is being drawn toward that self-same Mystery that attracts all other human beings who are seeking to overcome their own present condition. The word "mystery," though it belongs to a certain tradition, stands for that "thing" that is called by many names and is experienced in many forms; thus it can be called neither one nor many. The problem of the one and the many appears at the second stage, when the conceptualizing mind starts functioning in a particular way.

I do not defend the naive and uncritical notion that "there is" one "thing" that Men call by many names, as if the naming of the Mystery were simply a matter of attaching such tags as culture or language puts at our disposal. This is, incidentally, not the meaning of the already quoted Rig Vedic verse, "[God is] One [though] the sages call it by many names." Contrariwise, it is suggesting that each authentic name enriches and qualifies that Mystery that is neither purely transcendent nor purely immanent.

In Christian language—which is a legitimate, though not unique, way of true and meaningful discourse—I would say that the paradigm for this Mystery is the *Trinity*. Rather than being a single center, on which all ultimate human experiences converge in a unity (which ultimately could not avoid a certain monism), the Trinitarian paradigm allows for infinite diversity. The "persons" of the Christian Trinity are infinitely different—nothing is finite in the Trinity—so that the very name of person (*pace* Aquinas) is equivocal. In this model, the harmony or concord of a nonmathematical Oneness is not broken.

In Indian language, I would say that the paradigm for this Mystery is the *Advaitic* intuition, which refers to something that cannot be called either "one" or "two." The "Mystery"

toward which the religious experience of Humankind tends is neither the same nor different, neither one nor many: it is nondualistic. It allows for *pluralism*, the modern secular word I would use to express the same issue.

We cannot merely "talk" about this Mystery in an "objective" and nominalistic way. Our discourse is not "about" something that merely "is" or "is there." Rather it is a disclosure of a reality that I *am* and you *are*. The Mystery is not objectifiable because "you" and "I" are constitutively part of it. Nor is it merely subjective, because "we," the subject(s), are not all there is to it.

If the Christian reaches or comes into contact with that Mystery in and through Christ, can I still maintain, and if so how, that there is the hidden and unknown presence of Christ in Hinduism—or in any other religion, for that matter? Is not Christ the Way? Does not the traditional Christian liturgy always end, *per Christum Dominum nostrum*, "through Christ our (and not the universal) Lord"? Here, perhaps, the thesis of the book is highlighted most strikingly. The Way cannot be severed from the Goal. The spatial metaphor here may be misleading if taken superficially. It is not simply that there are different ways leading to the peak, but that the summit itself would collapse if all the paths disappeared. The peak is in a certain sense the result of the slopes leading to it. Our position distinguishes itself here from the nominalistic one mentioned before. In Christian terms, "Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father."¹ In a certain Hindū parlance the other shore is already here, realization is not "another" thing, there is nowhere to go: reality *is*.² As Buddhism declares: *saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa* and *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra*.³

And yet, the goal cannot be identified with any of the ways or means to it. Though Christ is the Mystery in the sense that to see Christ is to reach the Mystery, still the Mystery cannot be totally identified with Christ. Christ is but one aspect of the Mystery as a whole, even though he is *the* Way when we are on that way. Only when we are not walking on them, that is, when they are mere lines on a map, are there "many" paths. For the actual wayfarer, there is only one way. Not only is it unique, it is only a "way" if it gives access to the summit. For the speculative mind, it is a *pars pro toto*, for it is in it and through it that the Christian reaches the Mystery. At this summit, the Christian realizes that he and his experience of the Mystery are inseparable, indistinguishable; thus you discover Christ in all those who have reached the Mystery, even if their ways have not been the Christian one. Likewise you will have to concede that the Hindū who has reached realization, become enlightened, discovered *ātman-brahman*, or whatever has realized the ultimate Mystery. Only for the Christian is the Mystery indissolubly connected with Christ; only for the Vaishnava is the Mystery unfailingly connected with Vishnu or whatever has been the particular form for "attaining" *mokṣa*. This would also apply for the so-called unbeliever, atheist, humanist; but we do not need to elaborate any further here.

My concern that the cross of Christ should not be rendered trivial and powerless; *ut non evācuetur Crux Christi* does not arise out of a "*parti-pris*" or sectarian view, but just the opposite. It is because we are on the brink of a mutation in human civilization that, in my opinion, no religious tradition is any longer capable of sustaining the burden of the present-day human predicament and guiding Man in the "sea of life." It is important to stress continuity-in-depth and to discover the profound ties that exist between the human traditions that link Men together. Our deepest human fellowship does not occur just because, for example, we all have

¹ Jn 14:9.

² See *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 19.2ff., 20.1ff.; Śankara, *Upadeśasāhasri*, Padyabandha 10 etc.

³ See Nāgārjuna, *Mādhyamakāśāstra* XVI.

stomachs or appreciate a comfortable bed, but because we have a common dissatisfaction, uneasiness, desire for joy, thrust toward More. In other words, fellowship arises because we all live by *faith* in spite of the diversity of our beliefs.

I tried to say everything in the title of the book. But was it cryptic or apocalyptic, concealing or revealing? Significantly enough, not many critics pondered the subtleties of the genitive. My main concern was not to speak of (a) the unknown Christ of Hindūs who is "known" by Christians, nor (b) the unknown Christ of Christians who is "known" to Hindūs, under whatever form and name. In both cases the genitive is objective. But my primary intention was to speak (c) about the "unknown" Christ of Hinduism, which can be either unknown, or known qua Christ, to Christians and Hindūs alike. While in the cases (a) and (b) the genitive is objective, the title of the book intended to stress (c), the subjective genitive.

The author's intention was to state a case that could be interpreted differently by several parties and yet correspond to the basic intentionality of the sentence: there is an *x* that is unknown, qua Christ, to both parties and to which the name "Christ" could be applied once it is made clear that both sides can make a meaningful use of it. I present the Unknown Christ of Hinduism, that is, the mystic aspect that is also present in Hinduism, according to the mystical understanding of the Christian tradition. As they come to the belief that Hinduism is recognized as a true religion, Christians will find themselves obliged to call this mystic aspect "Christ." The title does not say "the Hidden Christ," as though Christians knew the secret and Hindūs did not. I wanted to lay stress on the presence of the one Mystery (not necessarily the "same" Mystery) in both traditions. Now, this Mystery is not a purely transcendent divine reality in which we all worship or recognize, in our different ways, one and the same transcendent "God." It is equally immanent and "this-worldly"; it is also "*sagūṇic*" in character and even possesses a historical dynamism. I wanted to stress that we meet not on a transcendent plane where differences matter no longer, where we are no longer in and of this World—but here in this World where we are fellow pilgrims, where we commune in our humanness, in the *samsāric* adventure, in our historical situation.

If this study, therefore, is so irenic, why did I use the name "Christ"? Why not Rāma? Or why not a neutral word not so loaded with the burden of history?

I shall briefly answer these questions in order. First of all, I used the name "Christ" precisely because of the burden of history. Symbols are not created at will, nor are they the product of single individuals. Christ has been and still is one of the most powerful symbols of humankind, though ambivalent and much-discussed. Christ is a historical name and carries with it the heavy reality of history, good and bad. The negative aspects add to its reality as much as the positive ones. That the historical name Christ should not be confined to the thus-named historical Jesus hardly needs mentioning here.

Second, in spite of its ambivalence, the power of that name is highly relevant to the actual problematic that we are here discussing. The living Christ of every Christian generation has invariably been more than a remarkable Jewish teacher who had the fortune or misfortune of being put to death rather young. Any Christ who is less than a Cosmic, Human, and Divine Manifestation will not do.

Third, I have not chosen any other name because this study is mainly directed toward deepening and enlarging that particular symbol and no other. The book was, as I have said, intended principally though not solely for a Christian readership.

Fourth, Christ is still a living symbol for the totality of reality: human, divine and cosmic. Most of the apparently more neutral symbols such as God, Spirit, Truth, and the like truncate reality and limit the center of life to a disincarnate principle, a nonhistorical epiphany, and often an abstraction. In this book Christ stands for that center of reality, that crystallization

point around which the human, the divine, and the material can grow. Rāma may be another such name; or Krishna, or (as I maintain) Īśvara, or Puruṣa, or even Humanity. But God, Matter, Consciousness, or names such as Future, Justice, and Love are not the living symbols that our research required.

The symbol we chose saves us from those pitfalls of pseudo- or one-sided mysticism that Martin Buber, among others, declared invalid. The name of Christ will not permit thought of an apersonal, indiscriminated (ultimately inhuman) unity, nor will it allow for an ultimate duality. The same Christ who "sits at the right hand of the Father"⁴ is the Firstborn of the Universe,⁵ born of Mary;⁶ he is the Bread,⁷ as well as the hungry, naked, or imprisoned.⁸

Within the Christian tradition this Christ is incomprehensible without the Trinity. A non-Trinitarian God cannot become incarnate. A non-Trinitarian Christ cannot be totally human and totally divine. The first case would be a monstrosity, as Jews and Muslims rightly point out when criticizing "incarnation" in a monotheistic framework; the second case would be a docetistic farce, as Hinduism and Buddhism point out in criticizing the Christian position from a merely historical viewpoint, as theohistorical imperialism. If Christ were an *avatāra*, why should one *avatāra* consume all the others?

I am only reflecting the Christian tradition if I consider the symbol Christ as that symbol that "recapitulates" in itself the Real in its totality, created and uncreated. He is at the center of the divine processions, being "originated" and "originating" (in the consecrated language, being begotten and co-inspiring): at the center of time gathering in himself the three times and being present throughout in each case in the corresponding way, namely at the beginning, at the end, and in between—at the center of all the realms of being: the divine, the angelic, the human, the corporeal, the material. There is not a single "type" of reality that is not represented in Christ, as I have shown by quoting not only John and Paul, but the Greek and Latin Fathers, the Scholastics and the Renaissance writers, the representatives of the *devotio moderna*, Spanish and French spiritual writers, the Rhinelanders, Lutherans, and modern theologians. Christ is not only the sacrament of the church, but also the sacrament of the World and of God. Any other conception of the symbol Christ falls short of what the Christian tradition has overwhelmingly understood this symbol to be.⁹

⁴ See Mt 22:44, 26:64; Mk 14:62, 16:19; Lk 20:42, 22:69, etc.

⁵ Jn 1:1, etc.

⁶ Mt 1:20ff.

⁷ Jn 6:35.

⁸ Mt 25:36, etc.

⁹ I cannot resist the temptation to quote a text that ties all the mentioned threads together, even historically, since it comes from the transitional period between Past Ages and Modernity: "Nam et congruum fuit ut qui est imago Dei invisibilis, primogenitus omnis creaturae, in quo condita sunt universa, illi copularetur unione ineffabiti qui ad imaginem factus est Dei, qui vinculum est omni creaturae, in quo conclusa sunt universa" [For it was also fitting that he who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation and in whom all things in the universe have their foundation—that to him there should be joined in an inexpressible union he who has come into being to express God, he in whom all creation is bound together, he in whom all things in the universe have been summed up] (Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, Exp. V, c. 7 [apud H. De Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole* (Paris: Aubier, 1974), p. 182, who in previous pages gives generous quotations for the Christian tradition]. Erasmus wrote, "We establish old things, we do not initiate new things"; "*nos vetera instauramus, nova non prodimus*," and De Lubac comments, "instauration n'est pas restauration," p. 241).

The thesis of the Unknown Christ is that, whether or not we believe in God or Gods, something in every human being does not alienate Man but rather allows Man to reach fullness of being. Whether the way is transformation or some other process, whether the principle is a divine principle or a "human" effort, or whether we call it by one name or another is not the question here. Our only point is that this cosmotheandric or Trinitarian, *purushic* or *isvaric* principle exists.

Christians have called it Christ, and rightly so. My suggestion is that they should not give it up too lightly and be satisfied simply with Jesus—however divinized. It is in and through Jesus that Christians have come to believe in the reality that they call Christ, but this Christ is the decisive reality.

I repeat: it is not that this reality *has* many names as if there were a reality outside the name. This reality *is* many names, and each name is a new aspect, a new manifestation and revelation of it. Yet each name teaches or expresses, as it were, the undivided Mystery.

I may venture a metaphor: each religion and ultimately each human being stands within the rainbow of reality and sees it as white light—precisely because of seeing through the entire rainbow. From the outside, as an intellectual abstraction, I see you in the green area and you see me in the orange one. I call you green and you call me orange because, when we look at each other, we do not look at the totality. We do not intend to express the totality—what we believe—but we evaluate and judge each other. And though it is true that I am in the orange strip with all the limitations of a saffron spirituality, if you ask my color, I say, "White"! The "Unknown Christ" remains unknown and yet continues to be Christ. Just as there cannot be a plurality of Gods in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic conception of God (they would coalesce), there cannot be a plurality of "Christs" (they would have to be somehow united). Either the Christian will bring *his* conception of Christ to other peoples and religions (as Christians sometimes understood their mission to be, for reasons not to be explained here), or he will have to recognize the unknown dimensions of Christ.

The author has been surprised at the enormous number of book reviews and studies occasioned by the original English version of his book. He has learned from all of them and is grateful not only for the many commendations he received but also for the criticisms. Nevertheless, one thing seems to have been achieved by this study: one can no longer bypass the problem stated by it and go on doing "missiology" or comparative religion in the "old" manner. In this sense, whatever merits or defects this book may have, it has done away with many aspects of a certain innocence or self-complacency. At present the writer would be much more radical in his approach, but to preserve intermediate steps in respect for the rhythm of the cosmos and of history is, as always, an indispensable condition for safeguarding the possibility of further progress. In patience we shall save our lives.¹⁰

Barcelona

August 15, 1979

¹⁰ Lk 21:19.

Part One

THE ENCOUNTER



THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

avijñātāṃ vijñātāṃ vijñātam avijñātām

*It is not understood by those who understand it;
it is understood by those who do not understand it.*

KenU II.3

εὐρέθην τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν, ἐφανῆς ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ἐπερωτῶσι

*"I was found of them that sought me not;
I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me."*

Rom 10:20¹

There is an overwhelming amount of literature on the encounter between East and West. This shows not only that the subject is one of vital importance, but that today the problem appears in an altogether new perspective.

We do not intend to complicate this already complex subject, but merely offer an answer to the question regarding where Hinduism and Christianity meet. Is there a possibility of dialogue or even mutual fecundation between them, or are they just two rival religions struggling to achieve supremacy—or perhaps simply parallel religions?

The current crisis that, from a sociological point of view, seems to be affecting most religions, and which we shall be discussing in the following pages, may appear to be of minor importance in a so-called modern world that is dominated by the economic factor and in which religions take second place. The institutional religions are undoubtedly going through a time of crisis, yet this diminished importance of the religious institutions does not affect the inner being but only the surface of Man's nature, since he cannot live a genuine human life without striving, more or less explicitly, to make sense of it. This is the deep meaning of the word *religion*: a constitutive dimension of Man that makes him conscious of his freedom—and responsibility. The Hinduism and Christianity we are speaking of, therefore, are to be understood as two concrete symbols of this human religiosity.

If, on the one hand, Christianity aspires to be a universal (and therefore complete) religion, what would be the meaning of an encounter with Hinduism? Where and how might Hinduism take up the challenge represented by the existence of Christianity? If, on

¹ See Isa 65:1; Rom 9:30.

the other hand, Hinduism claims to be the *sanātana dharma*, the supreme "eternal (infinite) religion," how might it enter into true dialogue with Christianity? Is there any possibility that Christianity might accept such a challenge? If at the core of the two traditions there lies a radical incompatibility, to play down the problem by speaking about mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence would mean to fail to take these religions seriously.

The meeting of religions is one of the most urgent and important human problems we are facing today. Of the main possible approaches, each of which with its specific characteristics, we can identify six solutions.

The *first* is the so-called *laical* solution (corrupting the original meaning of the word *laos*, or "people"). This "laicism" that construes itself over and above all religions, considering them sectarian, thus becomes a super-religion that, by reducing human religiosity to mere ideology, dictates to Man the ultimate meaning of life. We must not forget, however, that this "laical" attitude itself originated precisely as a reaction to the sectarian behavior of certain religions. In this sense, its challenge might also be considered healthy, since it forces the religious institutions to contemplate their devotion and rediscover the religious dimension of the human being as an *animale religiosum* who inquires into the meaning (or lack of meaning) of his own life, which cannot be reduced to only two dimensions.

A "laical" religion (in this sense) should not be confused with a "secular" religion, which is concerned with this life on earth in this century. Basically, every religion is secular insofar as it is concerned with our pilgrimage in this world—even though all too often religions have forgotten the century we are living in and concentrated exclusively on the "other world."

A *second* solution opts for the strictest segregation. This solution, however, is no longer acceptable today due to the technological "shrinking" of the world, in which our neighbor's religion demands, at the very least, our attention since it influences our own behavior. Today, moreover, isolation that shows no consideration for others would be no more than proud egoism and bring any religion to ruin. We cannot ignore the major contemporary problems that are common to all races and religions. War, hunger, injustice, denial of human freedom, and other such problems should be issues of central importance to any modern-day religion.

A *third* solution would be to substitute a religion considered to be less perfect with another that is regarded as superior. This solution, which was once extremely widespread, is not only impracticable and utopian, but it is also wrong and would create only disorder and confusion on both sides. A Christian "missionary" who aims to undermine the foundation on which Hinduism rests would not only be dishonest and contrary to the principles of Christianity itself, but it would also be doomed to failure due to the reactions it would provoke. Likewise, if a Hindū *guru* undermines or ignores the Christian background of Christian disciples, he not only violates such fundamental principles of the Hindū tradition as openmindedness and tolerance, but he is also doomed to failure due to his immoral and counterproductive attitude. Both psychology and history, in fact, show that such radical (and eradicating) conversions are inevitably short-lived unless there is a harmonious coming together of the two traditions.

A *fourth* solution, the persistent dream of an eclectic unity and idealistic embrace, simply disregards the very real conflicts intrinsic to situations, and is therefore unrealistic since it minimizes the differences. Those "liberals," Christian and Hindū, who claim that we are all equal and that, after all, the two religions are "transcendentally" one, overlook the actual and historical religious situation of real people. Neither Man nor religion is exclusively a transcendental entity.

A simple peaceful coexistence, on the other hand, might at first glance appear to be a practical *fifth* solution, but it is shortsighted and superficial. Coexistence can only be lasting

if there is a "co-essence" within the two parties. Forced coexistence, adopted in an effort to avoid problems, will dissolve as soon as one of the parties decides that the values personified in its own religion are of greater importance than the "problems" in question. In that moment it will seem worthwhile to break the "peaceful" status quo. True coexistence, as we have said, always implies a previous agreement on some form of co-essence. And this is precisely the point we cannot assume a priori. Neither can we isolate religions from their historical doctrinal content. It is one thing to criticize the myth of history, but quite another to deny its importance.

Coexistence, furthermore, will not satisfy either the traditional Christian culture, according to which Christianity incarnates the Mystery that God has revealed to the whole world, or Hinduism, which regards itself as primordial religiosity, dating back to before the *sampradāya*.² This solution may, in the long run, become a source of internal corruption or lead to external "compensations" in the form of violent and illegitimate attacks upon other religions. There is nothing as harmful as what modern psychology would call "unnatural suppression" and "pathological repression." Either Christianity gives up its claim to catholicity (universality) and concentrates on coexisting peacefully with other religions, or it will have to justify this claim by backing it up with a theory (in the classical sense of the word). If it does neither, it will have to bear accusations of being a fanatical and exclusive religion that seeks to destroy everything that fails to meet with its approval.

Similarly, Hinduism cannot be content to merely coexist with a militant Christianity that continues to claim all "rights and obligations" (jurisdiction) toward the whole world—as we can see from the historical evolution of Christianity after Constantine.

Even if Christianity were to abandon such a claim, it would still continue to have an irritating effect in the eyes of Hinduism because the rules of coexistence would be established by another religion and may differ from those proclaimed by the *sanātana dharma*. In other words, either Hinduism renounces its belief that it is the "eternal religion" (at least for the Indian people) or it has to explain how another *dharma* can satisfy the exigencies of its own self-understanding—but then this other *dharma* would not be an *aliud*, but an *alter*. If it were to coexist with a merely passive Christianity that respected the current status quo (based on the fundamental principle of modern Hinduism, which is that all religions are relatively equal), this would mean the transformation of Christianity into another of the various branches of Hinduism.

It is one thing to exacerbate incompatibilities and fuel dissension, but quite another to overlook or minimize differences and clearly conflicting views. Being well-disposed toward harmony is a necessary condition for mutual understanding (albeit insufficient on its own).

If we were to interpret the Christ event as a merely partial revelation of the divine, and Christianity, therefore, were obliged to abandon its claim as the catholic (universal) religion, or at least its co-responsibility toward the whole world, it would be betraying its mission. Likewise, if Hinduism ceased to regard itself as the most suitable religion for Man (or at least for Hindūs), this would also be a betrayal. We have come full circle. It would seem that if each is to remain loyal to its essential nature, there can be no peaceful encounter between the two.

Every tradition, of course, seeing itself from within, believes it is capable of fully satisfying the religious needs of its members and, regarding other traditions from the outside, tends to judge them as unsatisfactory. It is only when we take others as seriously as ourselves that a new vision may be possible. For this reason we must overcome the excessive self-confidence

² See Mt 13:35; Rom 16:25–26; Eph 3:8–9; Col 1:26; etc. See also the idea of the *sanātana dharma* mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* onward.

of any human group, though to do so we must somehow break free of our own respective traditions. This, in fact, is what seems to be the destiny of our time.

* * *

The question is far from simple, and it demands understanding and patience, respecting the rhythms of time. This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that, if modern-day society has experienced a real revolution in its vision of the world (as a result, especially, of modern science) religions cannot remain fossilized in an unchanging past. The problem is so acute and so delicate that we are unable to ignore it on the pretext that it is best not to disturb an apparent and superficial (though, ultimately, nonexistent) cordiality. If we do not face it with all humility and sincerity we will never succeed in overcoming the underlying uneasiness that will emerge only to damage and destroy both sides at critical points in the history of individuals and communities. The example of the fights in India between Hindū and Muslim communities is a warning that must not be ignored, and also shows that a merely political or pragmatic "peaceful coexistence" is not enough to solve the problem. Many Christians wish for the Hindū to become Christian, without taking into account that one can be Christian in many different ways. Hinduism, on the other hand, has no wish to convert Christians, because to the Hindū one cannot become what one *is* not; a Christian cannot become Hindū, and likewise a Hindū cannot become Christian, which is why the duty of Hinduism is to oppose every kind of conversion (which is regarded as alienation), as Gandhi's example illustrates.

Is there any solution to this problem? This brings us to the *sixth* solution: interpenetration and mutual fecundation—in other words, a change in the self-interpretation of these same religious traditions.

There seem to be three indispensable prerequisites for such an encounter: a deep human honesty in searching for the truth wherever it can be found; a great intellectual openness in this search, without conscious preconceptions or prejudices; and last, a profound loyalty toward one's own religious tradition. In the past, when people lived either in relative isolation or in submission, the religious quest was mainly directed toward the unidimensional contemplation of one's own religion. The authentic religious urge of today, however, can no longer ignore this thirst for open dialogue and mutual understanding. The religion of my brother becomes a personal religious concern for me also.

Spiritually minded individuals of all religions desire fervently to help and enlighten each other—not only under pressure of exterior events such as the current confrontations between traditional religions, but also for reasons of an inner nature, deriving from an intellectual and existential dynamism that I would define as religious. On an intellectual level, no religion can claim to have fully revealed the mystery of Reality.

The first step toward solving the problem consists in recognizing that an authentic encounter can only take place where the two "realities" come into mutual contact. I cannot encounter a cinema actor merely through the screen, because although I may, to an extent, come to "know" him through his image, he cannot come into contact with me.³

Christianity cannot meet Hinduism if Hindūs simply ignore Christianity, and vice versa, Hinduism will never be able to meet Christianity if Christians do not recognize it as such. This means that the true encounter does not take place on a purely doctrinal level, since we are dealing with two socially and anthropologically independent entities with a completely different self-understanding. The comparative study of religion will not yield any lasting results unless the doctrines are merely considered as starting points for reaching their relative underlying realities. It is not just a question of doctrine but, as we have said, of religion.

³ See P. De B  thune 2007.

I attempt now to describe this point of encounter, and since the standpoint of this whole book is that of a Christian reflected in his Hindū companion, I shall present my arguments as a Christian meditation aimed at understanding its own position without belittling the nature of Christianity or doing an injustice to Hinduism.

I would be tempted to do likewise from the Hindū point of view, using Hindū language, but there are three reasons I choose not to. First, it would weigh down this book needlessly; second, the problem is more Christian than Hindū; and third, it would not be necessary, since, as we have said, every encounter is a mutual "touch," where each "touches" the other, and I do not believe there is any need to emphasize my impartiality. Christ is not even a Christian word, despite the fact that Christians have monopolized it.⁴

⁴ See R. Panikkar 1989/15. The provocative title of this article (which was later cancelled) was "Do Christians Have a Monopoly on the Christian Revelation?"

CHRIST, THE POINT OF ENCOUNTER

The true point of encounter between two living religions takes place on a deeper level than that of doctrine, a level we might call existential, or, more simply, personal. Emphasizing this point is important if we are to avoid a great many misunderstandings. A religion is living if it is believed in. The point of encounter between two living religions, therefore, cannot be a concept or a doctrine, but only a concrete reality. To the Christian this reality cannot be any other than the person of Christ, the Anointed. Let us not forget that "person" does not mean "individual."¹ The great difficulty in the case of Christ is not theological, but lies in the almost exclusively monocultural acceptance with which the Christian belief has been formulated. I am referring to the *mythos* of linear history (and therefore of time).² The well-known modern debates on the "Christ of history" as distinguished from the "Christ of faith," which are perfectly legitimate to a monotheistic mind, are part of this difficulty.³ We have already spoken about the *mythos* of history, which believes that history is the only criterion of reality. The Christ of history is undoubtedly the real Christ, but Christ is not *exclusively* a historical figure. Something that belongs to history is certainly real, but the opposite is not necessarily true: reality is not necessarily historical. In this sense, the contribution of interculturality is paradigmatic. The reality of Christ cannot be split. Jesus of Nazareth is a historical being, but his reality cannot be reduced to history, as the Christian dogmas of the Eucharist and the resurrection also state. In the Eucharist there is the real presence of Christ, but not the proteins of Jesus, as we have repeatedly said. The resurrected Jesus is certainly real, not only on the days after the resurrection but today also. Each of us, for example, is the same person as a year ago, but identity is not logical; it is not identification. The *mibi fecistis* ("you have done it to me") is directed to both those on the right and those on the left, and in both cases he was "unknown" to them.⁴ Similarly, the idea of this book is that the real Christ cannot be reduced to the historical Jesus (who to the Christians is the real Christ); this identification belongs solely to the sphere of logic.⁵

¹ Elsewhere I have described the person as a node in a network of relationships—which includes all the pronouns defined as "personal."

² We have preferred to use the term *mythos* in order to make a distinction with "myth" in its present-day meaning. By *mythos* we mean that which is accepted almost unconsciously as obvious and unproblematic.

³ This problem is dealt with in the criticism directed to me in a profound study by J. Dupuis 1989, pp. 189ff.

⁴ See also Mt 7:22–23, where distinction is made between the real presence of Jesus and the use of his name. Christian "confession" is useless; it is the real presence of Jesus that is needed. This is the "hidden Christ" of our study.

⁵ Here again the concept is confused with the *res significata*, and again we see the tribute that the West paid to Parmenides thirty-five centuries ago. The laws of thought (which must be respected) are not

For two thousand years Christianity has been interpreted in the light of the great and brilliant Semitic mentality, but the theological challenge of the third Christian millennium demands that theology, if it is to be catholic (universal), take into consideration the cultures of the two-thirds of the world that do not belong to the Greco-Semitic cultural current and do not see reality in the same light. I would like to emphasize here that this is not relativism, but catholicity. The symbol of this universality (catholicity) is the kenosis of Christ, which only a mystical experience can help us discover. Christ emptied himself.⁶ This emptying, as we have said, is not a breaking with the old interpretations; it is a new awareness of the Mystery (of Christ). This does not mean that before Christ there was no such experience, but that there was no actual consciousness of it.

Not surprisingly, this new awareness concerns not only Christians. The Spirit is not the exclusive property of some and makes all things new, even in history. True tradition, especially religious tradition, is not the mere repetition of the past; it is constant renewal and new creation.⁷

This kenosis is the foundation of *freedom*, which should be the fundamental religious category of religion, whose "bonds" not only bind but also unbind us, setting us free from all law.⁸ Freedom accepts no law of any kind. Perhaps we lack an education in freedom.

I have tried to present the theological challenge of the third Christian millennium as the great interpellation of (Christian) faith if it is to be true to its catholicity—which demands mystical experience as the overcoming, not the negation, of conceptual thought.

. . .

In light of the above we might accept that, despite their obvious similarities, these two doctrines, Hinduism and Christianity, are actually very far removed, though they have the same *purpose* and pursue the same *goal*. They also begin from the same anthropological situation; they consider the same imperfect and vulnerable human being who strives to attain fullness and perfection, or simply happiness (*ānanda* is one of the names of the Hindū trinity). Neither religion will deny that the "ontic intentionality" is the same: to bring Man to salvation, happiness and perfection. A certain Christian theology affirms that Christian existence is, first and foremost, a free gift (which in the past was called "supernatural"), a "new creation." I cannot avoid the suspicion (and I say *suspicion*) that the theology of the supernatural (which today is losing ground) was merely an excuse, mostly unconscious, to defend Christianity as if it were above all other religions, which were considered as mere human creations. Yet neither can this Christianity deny that "grace" descends upon every human existence as it is and is granted, in one way or another, to all Men, because God wants everyone to be saved, and without "grace" there is no salvation. Christianity will say that its specific goal is the divinization of Man, in the Christian sense of the word. This means that it claims to be the custodian of the knowledge of a "gnoseological intentionality," but it will not contest the fact that the "ontic intentionality" may be the same in Hinduism, namely the total perfection of the human being or, borrowing the term used in both traditions, his divinization. God became Man so that Man might become God, the Christian tradition says.

By "ontic intentionality" I am referring to the dynamism of being that comes before any interpretation.

those of Being—as is emphasised especially by Buddhism and the fundamental intuition of the Advaita.

⁶ Phil 2:7.

⁷ "In Christo nova creatura," 2 Cor 5:17.

⁸ See "Ubi autem Spiritus Domini ibi libertas," 2 Cor 3:17; also Gal 5:13.

Words cannot adequately express this ontic intentionality, or purpose of existence, because every word is, in the broadest sense, ontologization. Thus, for example, a certain type of yogin would say "pure isolation" (*kaivalya*), while a Buddhist would use the term *nirvāṇa*. Some people would claim that there is no such thing as either an Absolute with which one can be united, or a duality that is able to give meaning to this union; and yet the "ontic intentionality" is identical—it is precisely that "end," that "final stage," toward which we are all striving from our different perspectives. Christianity and Hinduism meet together in a common endeavor that has the same starting point and the same ontic intentionality. There is one single *terminus a quo* and one *terminus ad quem* in the ontic order, even though the interpretations of them may differ.

If we have chosen to use Christian terms, it is not out of prejudice in favor of Christianity. After all, it is Christianity that has taken the initiative to meet Hinduism; so far the latter has been much less inclined to seek this type of encounter, and consequently it has been left to Christianity to clarify its own position. There is a tendency in contemporary Hinduism to prefer the fourth solution to our problem, namely mutual noninterference. There are two basic reasons for this: the bitter experiences of Christian interference in the past, and the idiosyncratic character of Hinduism that tends to not be overly concerned with the sociohistorical situation of mankind. In modern India, however, the problem is beginning to be felt very acutely.

Our thesis is simple, though the explanation of it cannot be simplistic: Christianity and Hinduism meet each other in a reality that has something human and something divine, that is, in what Christians can only call Christ, once they renounce their complete knowledge of him. Christ is their point of encounter. Though it is not possible to explain this statement without a confession of faith, we can attempt to demonstrate that, according to both Hinduism and Christianity, if such an encounter is to take place it can only do so in that reality that Christians call Christ and Hindūs call by other names—a reality over which no one holds the monopoly, as we never tire of stating when we distinguish the identity of Christ from his identification.

If we were to take a corresponding Hindū symbol it would be impossible to express it in one single word. There are two reasons for this: first, because Hinduism cannot be defined as *one* religion since it is a multiplicity of religious traditions. It is easy to understand the instinctive reaction of the people of India against being gathered together into one single Hinduism. Strictly speaking, Hinduism as a religious organization does not exist. In the case of the Christian religion, meanwhile, though a similar approach may warn us against considering Christianity as a monolithic mass, there is the central figure of Christ (albeit interpreted in different ways), who is not the founder of a religion but, to a certain extent, justifies its name. The strength and weakness of Hinduism both lie in the fact that it has no founder and, therefore, is not a "church" in the strict sense of the word. There are other forms of being a "church." It is the task of Christian theology to analyze the traditional dogma of the Body of Christ.

And this brings us to the second reason. Unlike Christianity, Hinduism has no unifying symbol. Not only does it have a plurality of symbols but, generally speaking, no symbol contains the same pluralistic polyvalence as the symbol of Christ. In the context of one particular Hindū tradition, Rama might possibly perform the same role. Rama, in fact, is both human and divine, yet the expression *totus homo et totus Deus* cannot be applied to Rama, though he is both material and spiritual, temporal and eternal. However, not all "ramologies" would agree, just as not all christologies would adopt the opinions expressed in this book. The problem is complex. Traditional Christian theology goes as far as considering

the figure of Rama as docetistic—Rama is true God but not true man; he is merely a human *avatāra*, a divine manifestation in human form. This almost classic “explanation” overlooks the fact that the Hindū and the Christian (still monotheistic) ideas of Man’s divinity are not the same. It would, therefore, be an inadequate interpretation to say that since Rama is God, he is not fully human.⁹

I am aware of the justified allergy of the many Hindūs who react negatively to the name of Christ because they associate it exclusively with the Christian church. In fact, the word “Christ” is a Greek word that means “the Anointed” and, even in the Old Testament, is applied to non-Jewish people. I would have no difficulty leaving out the name of Christ. If I have chosen to use it, therefore, it is because I have not found any other name that is such a complete symbol for expressing this theandrical reality that is at once corporeal, historical, and divine.

In other words, in using the name of Christ I am doing a service to the very *kairos* of the religion, which finds itself, on the threshold of the third (Christian) millennium, faced with the choice between converting to a specific religion or sect, or remaining faithful to its original intuition. This, indeed, is the dilemma that faces all human religiosity.

And now we come to our next point.

⁹ See Wähling 1980, pp. 392–93.

INSUFFICIENCY OF PURELY DOCTRINAL PARALLELISMS

A true encounter between two living religions clearly cannot be limited to simply pointing out certain similarities or common traits on a practical or theoretical level. Christianity and Hinduism are, precisely, living religions, not collections of concepts. Most of the aspects common to the two religions are, in fact, only common when they are separated from their respective contexts and compared side by side within an abstract and sterile setting that is equally extraneous to both religions. Furthermore, since the similarities must necessarily be selected according to the particular criterion of the selector, the intentionality of the latter tends to have an effect that reflects one's partiality. Whole sections of the encounters may thus be neglected or ignored simply because they are dissimilar or because the human eye may be more sensitive to similarities than to differences. Such similarities have their relative importance, but they do not touch the heart of the religions as they are actually lived by real people.

For example, the doctrine of grace in patristic and scholastic Christianity corresponds, perhaps, to a similar doctrine in the *śaiva-siddhānta* and Kashmir *śaivism*. Nevertheless, in spite of many aspects common to both doctrines, their similarity only offers a point of encounter for a doctrinal discussion among experts of the two theologies. Important as it may be, this or any other doctrinal comparison can never be the ultimate basis of an *integral* encounter between living religions. The essential point is not, for example, whether Hinduism and Christianity share the same idea of "grace," but whether the *Hindū* and the Christian are equally "graced," whether they receive grace in the same way and are equally aware.

Hinduism and Christianity have many similar concepts and aspirations that offer starting points for dialogue. However, dialectical dialogue is only an intermediary step, which, if a true encounter is to take place, must be followed by a profound investigation pursued to its furthest consequences. We should not minimize the importance of theoretical studies. Mutual knowledge is indispensable, but theoretical knowledge cannot be severed from reality and must be led by a higher wisdom, for any resultant encounter will ultimately arise from and depend on such wisdom.

The conclusions drawn from comparative studies of the two religions can be classified according to a simple dialectical scheme: either the two doctrines under comparison will both be considered right or they will not (with their corresponding gradations).

In the first case, the identity may be either total, if we find that the two doctrines are in fact the same; or it may be merely related, if both perform the same "function" within the different doctrinal frameworks. On this point I have introduced the notion of the "homeomorphic equivalent" which, as we have said, is a kind of third-degree analogy. Thus *Brahman* and God are not similar concepts but fulfill the same function of being an ultimate point

of reference in their respective systems. In this case, the two doctrines would be equivalent rather than identical. Whether identical or equivalent, we shall have to proceed further until we arrive at the point where the two religions differ, and then seek the *reasons* for the difference. In spite of all theoretical equalities, we shall reach the point of a historical alterity, since one religion is not, in fact, another. Let us imagine for a moment that Śaṅkara's Vedānta is theoretically equal to the Scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas. In spite of the theoretical parallelism, the fact would still remain that on one hand we have a *Hindū* religion and on the other a *Christian* religion, so that these two doctrines would represent the same intellectual garb for different historical realities.¹

If the two theories examined dialectically are not considered equally right, the less accurate should disappear to make room for the other, or at least be corrected by the more accurate. In fact, however, experience shows that not only would it be difficult for us to convince our opponent, it would also be impossible for him to give up his own doctrine, since it is deeply rooted in the heart of his own religion, which he professes for supra- and/or extra-rational reasons. Imagine a Thomist, for example, being forced to admit that the distinction between substance and accident is not valid. He would then be obliged to give up this distinction, but he will never willingly accept that it is possible to avoid pantheism. Even dialectics have their limits, in the undeniable existence of the other as a source of self-understanding and in the nonrational factors that play a role in our convictions.

There are two premises for dialogue: the *basic tenets* from which the doctrines have been developed, and the *existential truth* that the doctrines themselves attempt to explain. Both of these dimensions transcend the doctrinal sphere. There is more room at the level of dialogue than for merely doctrinal discussion. This does not mean, however, that we are underestimating the importance of doctrines. It is sometimes only too easy to rely on so-called experience while ignoring the almost endless theoretical implications of every existential attitude. Praxis requires a theory, and theory must lead to praxis. Therefore, as we shall see in the third chapter, for a real and lasting encounter to be possible, doctrinal encounter is also necessary (though not sufficient).

¹ See R. Panikkar, "La philosophie de la religion devant le pluralisme philosophique et la pluralité des religions," in *Pluralisme philosophique et pluralité des religions*, ed. E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1977), 193–201.

INADEQUACY OF CULTURAL SYNTHESSES

An in-depth encounter between Hinduism and Christianity cannot take place on the profane level of a mere cultural relationship, since we are not dealing with the encounter of two cultures, but of two religions. It is important to emphasize this point, as there is a well-meaning but misleading tendency nowadays to reduce the encounter of religions to a mere question of cultural interrelations. The balance between religion and culture is extremely delicate.

Hinduism has certainly produced a Hindū culture, and despite reservations, we cannot deny the existence of a Christian culture or the fact that the so-called Western culture is at least a *derivative* of Christianity. However, the laws governing cultural interrelations are not the same as those regarding encounter between religions. Notwithstanding, it is through the encounter of cultures on the historical plane that religious encounter is made possible while, vice versa, religious matters have a great influence on the cultural problem.

I have termed the interdependence and independence of culture and religion as "inter-in-dependence," because every sphere of being has its own autonomy and every relationship is mutual. These relationships could be expressed by saying that every religion forms a culture, but the culture also provides religion with a context. The two are neither separable nor identifiable. Man is both a cultural and a religious being. One religion may shape, fecundate, or influence several cultures, and one culture can host more than one religion. In addition, almost every major religion claims to have a transcultural value, as it believes it would continue to exist even if its host culture were destroyed. Likewise, most cultures have a certain transreligious value because they are not necessarily bound to one particular religion. Kerala Christians and North American Hindūs could be cited as two fitting examples of populations that follow one religion and "live" another culture.

The religious encounter engages the whole person. And if an encounter between cultures cannot be a purely speculative question, much less so can an encounter between religions. It must be an encounter between living persons who love and who strive to remain faithful to higher values that do not depend on their own will.

It must be in a religious spirit, therefore, that a true encounter between religions takes place. Those taking part must lay aside all partiality toward their own religious tradition and all prejudice against the others, while remaining true to their personal inner convictions. The encounter between religions is not merely an intellectual endeavor or a problem of a practical nature; it is the fruit of religious commitment. Religion *is* living and, therefore, real within religiosity—that is, in the awareness of being connected to a whole that is superior to us, whether we choose to call it God, Love, Cosmos, Justice, Humanity, Destiny, or whatever, debatable though it may be. If the encounter does not occur in this spirit it is not an encounter between religions, properly speaking, but between ethical systems, cultural trends,

or suchlike, which exist on a conceptual or at least conceptualizable plane. Concepts, even concepts of God, the Ultimate, the Absolute, although to an extent they are unavoidable, cannot represent the heart of religion because the ultimate aspect, whether "immanent" or "transcendent," is beyond all human understanding. Religions meet at their common source, not simply on the plane of ideas or ideals, but in the very depths of the human being or, in other words, on the plane of faith.¹

¹ I once attended a debate on religious problems, in which the dialogue was explicitly syncretistic and concentrated on emphasizing the points of contact. However, everyone was at variance with regard to the subjects of "tolerance" and "understanding"—*tot capita quot sententiae!* While agreeing within a rather vague and liberal dialogical framework, we all had our own personal opinions. Only a Catholic priest and a Buddhist *bhikkhu*, who both held maximalist attitudes, were *really* in agreement, and theirs were the only two concordant voices in the whole group. Without mysticism, that is, without transcending the mental (without, however, denying it), it is not possible to achieve harmony.

THE EXISTENTIAL ENCOUNTER

We have endeavored to show that a true encounter between religions belongs primarily not to the essential but to the existential sphere. Religions meet in the heart rather than in the mind. By "heart" we mean not the realm of sentiment but the concrete reality of our lives. The coming together of two different realities produces a clash, but the *place* where the encounter happens is one. This place is the heart of the person. In my heart I can embrace two religions, incorporating one within the other more or less harmoniously. Indeed, religions cannot truly coexist or even continue to exist as living religions if they do not "coexist" in the sense of penetrating into each other's heart.

A Christian will never fully comprehend Hinduism if he is not, in some way, converted to Hinduism. Nor will a Hindū ever really understand Christianity unless he, in some way, becomes Christian.¹ There are, of course, different levels of understanding, just as there are different levels of conversion. It is not necessary, however, for every person to "meet" another in this way. Some encounters, in fact, may be deceptive and lead to superficial syncretism or skeptical indifferentism. Not everyone is able (much less obliged) to become incarnate in another religion. Yet if an encounter is to be more than a mere diplomatic maneuver we cannot escape its exigencies. Since it is not just an individual but a collective and social endeavor, those involved must enter into the dynamics of the history of the encounter, so they may grasp and make use of its *momentum* and continue it in a meaningful way.

Let us first describe this encounter from a general point of view in the context of its existential and fundamental dimension. On one hand is Hinduism, which presents itself as a way of life, a set of traditions that lead the people of India toward their end, their fulfillment and salvation. The term "lead," however, is inappropriate: it cannot be said that Hinduism strives to command or lead. It is up to the Hindū himself to find his own *mokṣa* (salvation, liberation) by allowing himself to be led and following his own *dharma*. The terms "fulfillment" and "salvation," meanwhile, may be interpreted in completely different ways. On the other hand is Christianity, which also claims to lead to salvation. The two religions may be similar or different in detail, but the historical, concrete, and almost juridical fact remains that on the one side stands Hinduism as an entity, a way to "salvation" or "liberation," and on the other side stands Christianity as an entity with the same claims.

If the premises are not changed, this encounter may degenerate into a brutal clash. These premises must first be subjected to criticism, but let us begin by describing the mentality of the past. Hinduism follows a certain line of conduct and adopts a certain model of life. Christianity, meanwhile, intervenes, demanding that the path of Hinduism ultimately lead to "Christian fullness"; thus the Hindū model must be "converted" to the Christian model,

¹ On the fact that understanding cannot exist without the conviction that what is stated is the truth, see R. Panikkar 1975/3, pp. 132–67.

since this is the only one that Christians can conceive of.² The initiative comes from Christianity, so it is up to Christianity to justify it. What, then, is the inner drive that prompts Christians to claim "jurisdiction" over the Hindū also? Does Christianity really wish to destroy Hinduism to the extent that its every action is nothing but pure tactic, or an expedient for winning Hindūs over to its own cause, as they have so often felt? It is not our intention here to seek some historical justification, explanation, or excuse for the impression Hindūs have of Christianity, since the potential misuses or the dangers manifestly inherent in all dynamism are beyond the scope of these reflections.

Our problem, rather, is this: in this encounter, is Christianity justified at all in claiming rights over Hindūs or over Hinduism itself? Some Christians would rather speak of their duties toward Hindūs and Hinduism, but whether we call it a right or duty, it ultimately comes down to the same thing. Rational proof of such a right or duty cannot be given. Christianity is convinced that it has certain obligations, a conviction that is inherent in its self-understanding as a logical consequence of its nature; to recognize this fact means to embrace Christianity. It is part of the often tragic tension of history if the encounter between religions is not a peaceful but a painful encounter leading either to growth and development or to elimination and confusion.

Hinduism and Christianity meet not in intellectual agreement but in the ultimate tension or opposition of two living religions. To clarify the different positions, therefore, it will help us to illustrate frankly and sincerely the exigencies of this encounter. I shall endeavor, therefore, to define and describe the ultimate foundation of the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity, first from a Hindū and then from a Christian standpoint. We must not be blind to the brutal facts of the past, but neither should we be deaf to the needs of the present.

² We are still within the classic model that has long prevailed in the context of the (official) Christian climate.

THE HINDŪ BASIS OF THE ENCOUNTER

Hinduism is a religion of such richness and such marvelous exuberance that it has no reason to fear Christianity. Within its own multiform structure, moreover, there is room also for Christianity, though undoubtedly the Hindū idea of Christianity does not coincide with the consciousness Christianity has of itself. This is why Hinduism regards itself as a tolerant religion, while Christianity, perhaps misunderstanding its attitude, fears that this type of tolerance may be the most extreme form of intolerance, which consists in allowing others to occupy only the place it assigns them.¹

Hinduism has not always had the attitude we are describing. Though it is a typical Hindū trait, it is especially characteristic of modern Hinduism, with the exception, perhaps, of the renascent Hindū fundamentalism. In the past, Hindū traditions have always maintained, each in its own way, that the followers of other faiths are on a comparatively lower level, while admitting that they are moving toward the same ultimate goal, whose final revelation is Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, or simply Brahman. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says that all worship is ultimately directed to Kṛṣṇa, that it is he who brings all religious acts to fulfillment, even those devoted to other Gods.² Thus, if we were to follow these and similar teachings of other schools, we could arrive at the Hindū point of encounter called Kṛṣṇa or Śiva, but as we have said, for Hindūs there is no universally accepted symbol.

Today, Hindūs are in general convinced that all religions are good insofar as they lead Men to perfection. For this reason they would be willing to accept Christianity as another, younger religion, if the latter would only agree to give up its claim to exclusiveness and, consequently, to being the only complete religion.

What Hindūs defend against Christianity is their right to uphold Hinduism as their own religion, being the most perfect expression for them of the *sanātana dharma*, the eternal religion. Since Hinduism itself is an almost undefined collection of many different paths toward an ultimate mystery, all united theoretically by the authoritative tradition of the Vedas³ and practically by a set of common beliefs, and since in at least one modern form it recognizes non-Vedic religions as legitimate paths toward that same ultimate mystery, it finds it almost incomprehensible that other religions cannot accept this fundamental point and that they reject and repudiate the sincere and cooperative attitude that Hinduism has toward them. Hindūs thus discover that, according to Christians, Christianity is *the* way to fulfillment, whereas they themselves declare that there is "one way for you, but another for us. Our inspiration is the same, our goal is the same, but this world is necessarily a world of

¹ See P. Hacker, "Religiose Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus," in *Kleine Schriften*, pp. 376ff.

² See BG VII.21ff.; IX.23–24, etc. These and similar passages would allow for the development of a conception of the "anonymous Hindū" (or "unconscious worshiper of Kṛṣṇa").

³ See Louis Renou 1965, *The Destiny of the Veda in India*.

profuse multiplicity and diversity. Let us accept it as creation offers it to us, and let each of us follow his own path to its end (the famous *Svadharmā*)."

This is an attitude that can be found in all spheres of being, as can be seen, on a practical level, in the creation of the theoretical caste system, an institution that specifically reflects the different natures of Man. In this system (theoretically, at least) every individual fulfills his function in the cosmos by performing the duties most suited to his nature (or caste). Hinduism projects, so to speak, this caste system in its encounter with other religions. Every religion is implicitly regarded as a separate caste (which for a Hindū has theoretically no negative implications) within which the individual achieves his goal by fulfilling his duty. Whatever our caste and our *dharma* may be, says the Hindū, we will all meet together in the end.

In short, according to Hinduism we will meet either at the end of our journey (all rivers flow into the same sea) or at the very beginning (all receive water from the earth or the clouds or a source). It is only in the "interregnum" of our earthly pilgrimage that the rivers follow different courses.

There is, however, a more recent form of Hinduism that, motivated by the needs of today, leans toward a type of syncretism that is typically Hindū. This form of Hinduism would be ready to "sacrifice itself" as a distinct religion and be transformed into a universal ("catholic") religion without limitations regarding worship, dogma, and so on, as long as the other religions would do the same. We would then all meet in the absolute nakedness of a religion emptied of all contents, sharing the impetus of Man toward perfection, fullness, and happiness. According to this neo-Hinduism, we should renounce all that separates us and limits our freedom and the expansion of our being.⁴

For a long time, Hinduism—which, due to its many religious forms, has suffered and experienced at least as much as any other religion the imperfections of the human mind and the limitations of the human heart—has dreamed of this universal and boundless religion. We will only meet together in the Absolute, at the end of our pilgrimage, when we have learned that we are one and the same reality. We cannot meet in our differences, but only in that which unites us. We must put aside all that makes us different and renounce all our ideas, our convictions, and our practices. Truth, Silence, and Love will be the only dogmas of this new religion in which all Men may come together.

Summing up, the position of the Hinduism of many intellectuals would be this: either we meet as sister religions striving toward the same goal, or we give up our individual paths and meet on the mysterious, divine common ground of our Beginning and our End.

⁴ See S. Radhakrishnan 1927, *The Hindū View of Life*; R. Tagore 1960, *The Religion of Man*; and R. N. Dandekar 1967, *Some Aspects of the History of Hinduism*.

THE CHRISTIAN BASIS OF THE ENCOUNTER

Christianity accepts the challenge of Hinduism, and we hope to show that it will be precisely in the context of Hinduism that the two will meet. We shall first illustrate the Christian position and then Christianity's answer to the Hindū point of view.

As two religions that believe in God, Hinduism and Christianity undoubtedly meet in God—not, however, in their respective conceptions of God, but in God himself, the Ultimate Mystery. The Christian elaboration is based on this meeting ground, which does seek to achieve the adhesion of Hindūs, but only their understanding.

"We all meet in God. Not only is he omnipresent, but everything is in him, and we, with all our strivings and all our actions, are *of* him, *in* him, come *from* him and go *to* him."¹ (In this context we might just as well have said "it" or "her" instead of "him"—God has no gender). Now, there is only one link, one mediator between God and all the rest, between the one and the many; yet this mediator, being real (Christ), cannot be fulfilled in one single individual, as we have repeatedly said and will continue to say.

In other words, the point of encounter cannot be a mere abstract platform, a disincarnated place, as it were. God may be the ideal, the end, the goal, but transcendence obviously cannot be the starting point of the encounter. From the very beginning we need a real meeting place, something more than just an idea or a concept, and more also than the mere concept of humanity. The starting point must be Man himself.

This theandrical "something," the concrete connection between Absolute and relative that all religions recognize in one way or another may be called "Lord," but also "Christ," as this symbol has precisely the function of connection. The Christ we are speaking of does not at all belong to Christians, nor does he correspond exclusively to the individual named Jesus of Nazareth. Let us, therefore, call by the name of *Christ* that which we consider to be almost by definition the point of encounter.

As we said earlier, the word "Christ" is not a Christian term, though for historical reasons it has been adopted by the Christians. At the risk of being misunderstood, I would venture to say that the Christ we are referring to is the *ecce homo*,² the Unknown Man (or the *puruṣa*). We must also specify, however, that Unknown Man is also divine—and in this lies the Christian mystery.

This *man* is the Christ: that reality from whom everything proceeds, in whom everything subsists, and to whom all things, condemned to suffer the ravages of time, must return.³

¹ See YS I.1.2: *janmādi-asya-yataḥ* (from which the origin, etc. of this [world proceed]). See also "That from whence these beings are born, that by which, when born, they live, that into which they enter at their death—that is *Brahman*" (TU III.1). See Acts 17:28, etc. and also the third part of the book.

² Jn 19:5.

³ The following references illustrate something more than merely doctrinal parallelisms, since

Christ is the incarnation of divine grace, who leads every man to God; there is no other way but him.⁴ Is this not what Christians call Christ? It is he who inspires the prayers of Man and makes them "audible" to the Father. It is he who whispers divine inspiration to us and speaks as God, whatever form a person's faith or thought may take.⁵ Is not Christ the Light that enlightens every man who comes into the world?⁶

Consequently, from the point of view of Christianity, Christ is already present in Hinduism, and the Spirit of Christ is already at work in every Hindū prayer. Christ is in every form of worship, insofar as it is directed to God.⁷ The Christian who lives his religion profoundly refuses to judge Hinduism.⁸ As long as Men are pilgrims on the earth, Christianity will not have the right to separate the wheat from the chaff. Contrariwise, if the Christian acknowledges and accepts Hinduism as it is, he will discover that Christ is already at work within it.

Christians and Hindūs come together in the profundity of death, in the surrendering of ourselves and our most immovable opinions on others, in the acceptance of the "new life" that is always there at the heart of every true religion. Whether we are Christians or Hindūs, we cannot consider ourselves as the guardians of the truth, but only as beings who are possessed by a truth that is greater than us and cannot be known. To know, in fact, means to possess, and is an act of this "I" which must die so that new life can begin. The Christ who is already present in Hinduism and whom Christians can recognize and worship has not yet completed his mission here on earth, either in Christianity or in Hinduism. "If the grain of wheat does not die . . ."⁹

both traditions put these texts in the context of the quest for the ultimate mystery (cf. *TU* II.9.1). See *SU* II.4; III.3; III.9; III.11; III.16, etc.; *BU* I.4.7; II.4.5; *TU* II.6.1; *CU* III.14.2.

⁴ See *KathU* II.2.3; *MundU* III.2.3; *SU* I.6; II.4; III.4; III.8; III.20; *CU* III.15.3; *BG* IX.23; X.10-11; XVIII.56, 58, 62.

⁵ See *MundU* II.2.2ff., *SU* III.12, *CU* VIII.14.1.

⁶ See *KathU* V.15; *MundU* II.2.9-10, etc.; *SU* III.12; 17, etc.; *CU* III.12.8-9; III.13.7; III.17.7-8.

⁷ See *Prov* 8:34-35; *Jn* 8:58, etc. See *BG* IX.24; 26; 29ff.

⁸ See *Rom* 14:10; *Judg* 4:12, etc.

⁹ See *Jn* 12:24.

CHRIST, A CONCRETE SYMBOL

From the point of view of Christianity, Christ's presence in Hinduism, in the sense we have described above, makes of it not another *dharma*, but a part or stage of the same *sanātana dharma* that Christianity also claims to be. We use the term *dharma* and not "religion" in the institutional sense, as the latter implies a sociological reality which precludes the possibility of perceiving a deeper harmony between Hinduism and Christianity.

Hinduism as a whole, being merely the concrete expression of the existential *dharma*, can take as many forms as people and circumstances require, each form being relative to time and space.¹ The bold Christian claim is that in the historical unfolding of God's revelation there is a kind of pluralistic continuity maintained by what Christianity calls Christ. Thus the existential *dharma* of Hinduism is directly related to what is known in Christianity as the "economy of salvation."² Christians believe that in speaking through the prophets and the *ṣṛi* (sages) God has sent his Word—living, personal, and one with him—to fulfill all justice and all *dharma*s.³

At the same time, however, Christians frequently fall prey to undue extrapolation. Peter himself, just because he loved Jesus, felt he had a right to intervene in the relationship between Jesus and John and was rebuked for it.⁴ Christians have always tended to interpret Christ only in their own terms. Or perhaps we should say, rather, that the Christian context culminating in the myth of history (first Judaism, then European religions, followed by scientific cosmologies) has generally been considered as the universal human fabric. Other expressions of the human and religious phenomenon have scarcely been taken seriously. When Christians were confronted with something beyond their horizon, they were tempted to take refuge in an exclusivist attitude. This temptation ("We are at the center of the world and hold the paradigms for judging others") is common to almost every religion and culture, but in the case of Christianity the consequences of such an attitude have been more serious because of the expansionistic drive in Western history. Today, however, Christian reflection has begun to become aware of this narrow vision.⁵

¹ See my chapter "Algunos aspectos fenomenológicos de la espiritualidad hindú actual," in *Misterio y Revelación*, esp. pp. 26–28.

² See W. Bierbaum, "Geschichte als Paidagogia Theou. Die Heilsgeschichtslehre des Klemens von Alexandrien," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 5 (1954): pp. 246–72; J. Daniélou, *Le mystère du salut des nations* (Paris, 1948); K. Rahner, "Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte," *Schriften zur Theologie* 5: pp. 115–35; A. Darlap, "Fundamentale Theologie der Heilsgeschichte," in *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965), pp. 3–153.

³ See Jn 1:9–17; Heb 1:1–2.

⁴ See Jn 21:22.

⁵ A valuable help in overcoming this "microdoxic" conception of religions is offered by the study

In order to overcome the deep-rooted misunderstandings between Hinduism and Christianity, we would have to analyze the different approaches to the Center that sustains everything and is also the key to intelligibility.⁶ The Western Christian tradition, with its language full of theistic connotations, identifies the Center with the historical Jesus, while some of the fundamental Hindū intuitions relate it to *brahman*, *ātman*, *vāc*, *bindu*, and other symbols of the Absolute. The different understandings of this Center are not irrelevant and its identification with one or the other religion is not without importance, yet both traditions refer to this Center and their differences, therefore, must not overshadow their convergence—nor vice versa.

We might go a step further and say that most of these different understandings (and often misunderstandings) stem from the almost diametrically opposed dynamisms that operate within the very process of intelligibility. The essentially Semitic mentality of Christian theology renders the ultimately ineffable Mystery intelligible by *ascending* to it from its concrete and visible manifestation: Jesus Christ. Once identification is established it becomes virtually impossible to take the opposite direction, because if Jesus Christ is the Mystery, any other real name or real manifestation of the Mystery will appear inadequate as it contradicts the Christian understanding. To the essentially Aryan mind of Hindū theology, on the other hand, the ultimately ineffable Mystery is affirmed by *descending* to each of its concrete and visible manifestations, such as Rama, Kṛṣṇa, and many others. Identification will never be complete or closed, and therefore there is nothing to prevent other identifications from being recognized without destroying the identity of the Mystery.⁷

I would like here to emphasize the fact that neither the Christian understanding of catholicity nor the Hindū thirst for universality are in contradiction with Christian “dogma” (as it is termed in theology). A dogma is definitely an authoritative and consecrated expression and the bearer of an ineffable truth, yet faith is not about dogmas, but about that which is expressed in and through them.⁸ Faith has no object, otherwise it would be idolatry.⁹ Dogmas are means, channels; they do not claim to fully represent, much less congeal, the truth they strive to convey to those who live in the context of the tradition that “proclaims” the particular dogma. Hindūs and Christians alike believe in a broader truth that is conveyed in and through specific concrete expressions.

In Catholicism the word “dogma” does not refer to a “truth” or a “formula” in which one must believe. The dogma is a way of addressing our intellect and allowing our understanding (as far as is earthly possible) to reach the deep, unfathomable nature of Reality. We must be careful not to take these words as a subjective interpretation of Christian truth or a relativization of dogmas in the modern sense of the word.

of oral traditions, which have hitherto been ignored (if not actually spurned) by theologians. These religions reveal characteristics that are common to both Hinduism and Christianity.

⁶ See *PramU*VI.b, which gives a recurring metaphor.

⁷ Popular religiosity offers frequent examples. While an average theologically untrained Christian will not easily accept any symbol other than Christ, the average Hindū will have no qualms in accepting Christ according to Christian terms—and is surprised when he finds that it is not the same for the Christian.

⁸ See the central statements of Thomas Aquinas, such as: “Fides non est de muntiabilibus,” “actus fidei non terminatur ad enuntiabile sed ad rem,” etc. See also K. Rahner, “Was ist eine dogmatische Aussage?” *Schriften zur Theologie* 5: pp. 54–81; R. Panikkar, “La foi dimension constitutive de l’homme,” in *Mythe et foi*, ed. E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1966), pp. 17–63.

⁹ See R. Panikkar 2006/29.

The genuine claim of the Hindū *dharma* is not, strictly speaking, a kind of syncretism (even though it often takes this form). It is the voice of catholicity, the very dynamism of the existential *dharma* that leads to a sublimation of "beliefs" and tends to overcome every form of exclusivism, without denying individuals the right to follow their own religious practices. Likewise, when the Christian declares that Christ is God, that Happiness is Heaven, that Perfection is union with God, that Truth is the *logos*, and so on, he is seeking not to limit these truths but rather to give them living content and real meaning, in order to prevent them from being reduced to vague and abstract aspirations that each individual can then interpret in his own personal and narrow way. This principle undoubtedly applies to any religious statement or expression of faith (and I refer to "faith" here, not "belief").

Similarly, the Hindū may bow to the ultimacy of *saccidānanda brahman* while, in his need for the concrete, he acknowledges that Śiva (or Kṛṣṇa or Kālī) is the absolute goal of the universe, the "path" toward ultimacy, the receptacle of the same truth, perfection, and bliss that are, in actual fact, ineffable, though both the Hindū and the Christian, in their own different ways, invoke them and desire them. Both agree that universality, catholicity, openness, and perfection do not mean vagueness, purely abstract intention, nihilism, and uprootedness from this earth and our human surroundings. The Christian dogma or the Hindū tenet is neither an idol nor a limitation or definition of faith. These are just expressions, channels through which we may reach the Mystery; they are not the goal, but the path we have to follow in order to reach fullness.

The "sacrifice" that neo-Hinduism demands of all religions—that they are transformed and become human religiosity—is welcomed by Christians. Is it not a Christian commandment to deny oneself, to "hate" one's own life and to die completely in order to be born again into divine life? Is not the mystery of the cross, as symbol of the resurrection, the central core of Christianity?

What Christianity claims with regard to Hinduism is not a sort of juridical right. Christ does not belong to Christianity; he belongs to his Father only. Christianity and Hinduism both express and discover a belief in the cosmotheandric mystery, albeit in two different ways.

The encounter of Melchisedech with Abraham¹⁰ and, later, the revelation of Peter at Joppa¹¹ and the many experiences of Paul¹² are some of the authoritative instances of this Christian attitude and position, in addition, of course, to the living example of Christ and his teaching.¹³

Hinduism appears to say, "For the very reason that we are all the same, we remain separate. The fact that we are ultimately one allows us to simply coexist without having to strive for visible unity; we are already the same ocean—the only difference is that you are one stream and we are another. Since we are already united, we do not have to worry about our present separation, which is merely apparent."¹⁴

To which Christianity would reply, "Since we are ultimately all equal, and the differences between our religions belong solely to the sphere of contingency, let us strive to go beyond that which separates us as human beings. This separation, despite the fact that it reaches so far back in history, is not necessary. Let us embrace one another and end this separation;

¹⁰ See Gen 14:17–20.

¹¹ See Acts 10.

¹² See Acts 9, etc.

¹³ See Mk 12:10.

¹⁴ See the Upanishadic metaphor of the different rivers which, once reaching the ocean, become only ocean. *PrasnU* VI.5, etc.

let us uncover and reveal our profound unity, let us realize and manifest the depths of this identity whose existence is the object of all our longings. If there are any differences they will disappear, just as the liquid in two communicating vessels levels out. The one with more will spontaneously share it as long as the other does not refuse the gift."

The meeting together of the great currents may temporarily create a few waves or whirlpools, but enrichment and growth will be mutual. Christianity aspires to be "catholic," in the sense of "complete," but it cannot logically be so until this unity has been achieved. The mistake lies in confusing *religious unity* (to which we aspire) with the *unity of religions*. We are not self-sufficient monads, but different aspects of the same religiosity. "That all may be one"—this is what motivates Christianity to realize this oneness, which does not, of course, mean uniformity. "Since, as you say, we *are* the same, let us truly *be* the same!" Christianity does not seek to assimilate or dominate; it does not wish to destroy, but simply to share with Hinduism the same aspiration to harmony.

I would venture to say, in fact, that this thirst for unity, this prayer for oneness, is a fundamental element of Christianity. Clearly, unity that is not based on the truth (which is not uniformity) is not unity at all. This means that no human compromise is a way toward union, and that this union is not the result of sitting down together and framing a liberal religious constitution, but of praying and striving together to enter into the Mystery of God. It also means, however, that though Christians may be convinced of the substance of their faith, they cannot foresee the future developments of their church, nor have access to the plans of divine providence; hence they must not cling to a fixed scheme or to a frozen faith. New dogmas, updated formulations, real evolution, and progress are the constant characteristics of Christianity, as of all religions. No one knows how Christianity will appear once the waters of faith unite with those of other religions to form a larger river, where the peoples of the future may quench their thirst for truth, goodness, and salvation.¹⁵

There is little sense in discussing here what Christianity considers definitive or subject to change.¹⁶ There is and there will always be continuity, but it is not for the theologian to pontificate, just as it is not the pontiff's task to silence the prophet and control the future. "Follow me," Christ said to the first head of the church, "and do not concern yourself with John." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."¹⁷

Finally, we will add a word about what Christ is to the Hindū himself, since at first glance and from his point of view it appears no less than ridiculous, if not preposterous, to state that the encounter takes place in Christ. Our intention here is not to make any kind of apologetics or attempt to dispel all the misconceptions that Hindūs have about Christ (many of which are caused by Christians themselves). These are questions of major importance but lie beyond the scope of this study. Our only aim here is to clarify the issue as it stands.

As we have said, Hinduism and Christianity both meet in God, and God is, so to speak, at work within both religions and transcends them. The Christian doctrine claim is that God and Christ have a unique relationship, that they are indivisible, inseparable, but at the same time distinct, and that where God is at work in this world, it is always in and through Christ that he acts. Hinduism would have no difficulty in understanding this aspect of God and

¹⁵ See R. Panikkar, "Ratnatraya: a Preface to a Hindū-Christian Theology," *Jeevadhara* 49 (January–February 1979): pp. 6–63.

¹⁶ A few decades ago, many theologians, in their desire to be open, would present the question with a list in mind of all the "concessions" that Christianity could make and the "fixed" or "nonnegotiable" points that must be strictly preserved. In my opinion, this approach is methodologically inaccurate and theologically corresponds to a rationalistic attitude.

¹⁷ See Mt 6:34.

would perhaps call it *Īśvara* (Lord) or *Bhagavān*. The above statement about Christ as the place of encounter may also be understandable (or at least acceptable) to the Hindū, if an equivalent (homeomorphic) statement is made about *Śiva* or *Viṣṇu* or *Brāhma*. The equivalence will not be absolute since the theological contexts are different, but it may contribute to an existential understanding of the Christian statement.

The obstacle arises when, with the necessary qualifications, Christianity identifies Christ with Jesus, the son of Mary. It is precisely this identification that characterizes the Christian belief. The Hindū can respect this "theohistoriological" aspect of modern-day Christianity, but he cannot share in it. As we have said, however, Jesus is the Christ, but Christ is not limited to Jesus.

We have continually talked about "God" without explaining the meaning of the word, which, in fact, implies a Mystery and, as such, is ineffable. We can, nevertheless, clarify that the Christian God is essentially Trinitarian and the Trinity is not monotheism, much less tritheism; God is not substance, but Relationship, and we and the world are within this Relationship—as I have tried to explain elsewhere with the term "cosmo-theandric experience."¹⁸

¹⁸ See R. Panikkar 2004/LII.

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE SPIRIT

We would like here to propose an important consideration that may help to overcome these difficulties. We are referring to the Spirit of God as a possible place of encounter. It is only in the Spirit, in fact, that prayers meet, intentions merge, and individuals enter into deep communion.

We must first, however, clarify this question of the confession of *Christ* as universal savior, which to the Christian is so vitally important. Moreover, to speak of the Spirit without first mentioning the concrete, theandric Christ might suggest that we all believe, in a vague and amorphous way, in a certain spirit of truth and holiness. This is by no means false, but I am convinced that a general commitment to an attitude of truth and sincerity, while *essential* to every real encounter, is not *sufficient* to constitute the foundation for a profoundly religious, and not merely ethical, understanding. Therefore, we can say that if Christ in Jesus, as the culminating point of God's self-disclosure, appears too specifically Christian to be accepted by a Hindü, the Spirit of God—which Christians consider to be the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ, and in Hinduism corresponds homeomorphically to the divine, all-penetrating *śakti* that reveals God in his immanence and is present in all his manifestations—provides the real ground for authentic religious communication and profound dialogue.

Anyone who prays sincerely does so in the Spirit; indeed, ultimately it is the Spirit that prays within him. While Christ as the Incarnate Son of God is a specifically Christian figure, the presence and reality of the Spirit is a common and important element to both Hinduism and Christianity. It is only because the Spirit lives in our hearts and in the world that the *logos* was able to become flesh and establish its dwelling among us. In other words, we meet in the Spirit, the Spirit of God, which to Christians is the Spirit of Christ. Let me clarify immediately that we are not dealing here with a mere semantic quibble. It is not a question of establishing whether this Spirit is the Spirit of God, of Christ, or of Śiva, but of agreeing on the fundamental nature of this Spirit.

We cannot discuss here all the implications and consequences of this matter; I would like, however, simply to offer a few reflections of a pastoral nature. Basically, the Christian encounter with Hinduism, as we have said, is not a doctrinal dialogue. It is a historical encounter between religions that takes place in the context of the actual meeting of individuals in society. This encounter is truly possible, because it takes place in the presence of He who is already in the hearts of all those who, *in good faith*, adhere to one or the other of the two religions.

Mutual understanding is an essential and ineluctable condition. Knowledge alone, however, is not enough. Not only does it lack the warmth necessary for a fully human encounter, but it tends to produce reactions of an almost antagonistic nature, since human knowledge always implies an egocentric attitude. The known "thing" (doctrine, person) comes to *me*. I am on

my own ground; I am the host. I receive, accommodate, and assimilate the "things" that I know; in other words, I enrich myself.

Only mutual love makes it possible to go beyond this egocentric attitude to knowledge. When I love, I come out of myself; I let myself go; I am no longer on my own ground but have become the guest, and it is I who am received and possessed. Purely intellectual knowledge offends all that which is *not* assimilated, but is left behind. I may, for example, reach a degree of synthesis in an intellectual victory over my opponent but, in fact, all I will bring back to my system are the spoils of the confrontation. Śāṅkara, let us say, may be surpassed or "understood," but the Śāṅkarites will remain outside, unconvinced.

Such requires, on both sides, dedication to asceticism and mystical life and detachment from all categories, formulas, and prejudices. This should not, however, be taken as a negation of "orthodoxy," but rather as its integration into "orthopraxis."

An authentic Christian encounter with other religions requires a special asceticism—the shedding of all superfluity, "garb," and superficial form, to remain alone with Christ, the naked Christ, dead and alive on the cross, dead *and* living in Christians who dare to meet together with their fellow believers. This special kind of asceticism involves true mysticism, that is, immediate contact with Christ, which leads the Christian beyond (but not against) formulas and explanations. Only then can Christ be discovered where he is, for the moment, concealed; only then is it possible to help unveil or reveal the mystery that has been hidden in God since the beginning of time.¹ Only very few are perhaps capable of this sort of shedding, and capable of abiding with the naked Christ living within them, thereby fulfilling existentially the incarnation of Christ.

Both parties, however, may benefit from the encounter. The Christian will no longer feel the urge to "convert" the Hindū, and the Hindū will no longer feel threatened by a foreign religion.

What we are saying is that the encounter with Hinduism requires more than just a certain degree of purity and the effort of nonattachment (*asakti*). We must rid ourselves of all pride and complacency for having have "touched" the Mystery and realized the Truth. We have to accept our *karma* and our *siddhis*, our limitations as well as our gifts. We must swim in the stream of history without ceasing to fly in the air (*ākāśa*) of the timeless. We need incarnation as much as transcendence, and our *iṣṭādevatā*, the incarnation of the divine for us, must be a real symbol, something more than a mere sign.

The consequences of all this are extremely far-reaching, and it is the reason why the pure science of religions is doomed to remain propaedeutic. The science must be studied, but it must also be transcended. The purpose of the encounter is not to give rise to a new "system" but to give birth to a new *spirit*, a spirit that is both ancient and constantly new. Spiritualities, more than being "studied" (since they do not actually constitute "objects" of study) must be lived, intelligently experienced.

The meeting of religions should be a *religious* act, an act of incarnation and redemption, a meeting in *naked Faith*, in *pure Hope*, in *divine Love*—and not a conflict of formulas, with the expectation of "winning the others over" (—to what?).

In *naked Faith*: I believe, *credo*! It is not, however, a matter of causing the living expression of a mystical act to materialize as a faith crystallized into a set of formulated beliefs. The act of faith is a gift of God, through which I partake of the divine knowledge; it is a simple, vital act that needs only a minimum of intellectual clarity. "I believe, Lord!" and this act alone is a saving act. I believe in the only thing that demands this supreme act—in God, the Mystery,

¹ See Col 1:26–28.

the Void, the Ineffable, the Infinite (*sat* and *asat*). My understanding is vague and my vision unclear, yet I cannot deny it and in some way I already "savor" God as Trinity—Father, *Logos*, and Holy Spirit; Light, Life, and Love; *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. And faith, in turn, allows me to enter into the ineffable heart of divinity, and to discover that the Father is omnipresent and the Source of all things, that the *logos* is the Man, and that the Spirit is the breath of life in humans and the universe: "I believe, Lord!" I cannot express this any other way; rather, many expressions can help, but I find them all unsatisfactory. I believe in the invisible, in the transcendent and the immanent at the same time, in *ātman-brahman*, or in Viṣṇu, the Supreme, or Śiva, the Absolute. All these "articles" of faith, however, are merely "articles," expressions, manifestations, explicit examples of the mystical act of faith, which has no fixed point, no adequate intellectual expression, and can only be imperfectly translated into human words. All this might be summed up in the attitude expressed through the words of the believer, whether Hindū or Christian: "Nor I, nor I, but thou, O Lord." It is in this faith that Christians and Hindūs meet as brothers.²

It is in *pure Hope* that the Christian and the Hindū meet, in the desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*), in the awareness of being already possessed by God and thus being (in) his fullness, in the expectation of the manifestation and glory of the Infinite. How can either exclude the other, when both are imbued with the same hope of liberation and union?

In *genuine Love* the encounter is not only implicit; it is also explicit, though not complete. The Christian and the Hindū not only share the same hope, not only do they meet others in faith, but each embraces his "ideal," whether it be God, Christ, or his chosen *iṣṭadeva*, *iṣṭ*, and communicates with the reality of this Symbol in the person of his brothers and sisters, the Men of this earth, with no distinction of race, creed, or condition, including the cosmos in this embrace. If he truly loves he will discover Christ or his *iṣṭadeva* everywhere. It is Christ himself (Christ the Unknown) who has awakened this love, and neither the Christian nor the Hindū will be able to explain how they came to be inflamed by it. Love unifies, makes one, though without uniformity.

In fact, this religious encounter is far more than just a meeting between two friends. It is a communion in being, in the one Being (so to speak), which is much more intimate to both than they are to themselves. It is communion *in* Christ. There is no condescension, paternalism, or superiority in the true encounter, because Christ is merely the name of a Symbol. In the unity of love it is not important whether one's role is to teach or to learn. He who possesses a greater intensity or a broader knowledge in a certain area of spirituality will spontaneously share what he has with the other, his neighbor.

Only when a Man is completely empty of himself, is in a state of kenosis, of renunciation and annihilation, will Christ be incarnated in him. Only kenosis allows incarnation, and incarnation is the way to redemption (*Nirvāṇa* and *samsāra* in Buddhist language). Only the attitude of *naiṣkarmya*, the renouncing of the fruits of any good deed, only the egoless action in which the *ahamkāra* is overcome, leads Man to his true Self and allows him to take part in his own liberation and that of the World.

² See R. Panikkar 2006/29.



Part Two

HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

*ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāṃstathaiva bhajāmyaham,
mama vartmānuvartante manusyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

*In whatsoever way Men approach me, even so do I reward them;
for it is my path, O Partha, that Men follow in all things.*

BG IV.11

*οὐκ ἔστιν προσωπολήπτης ὁ Θεός, ἀλλ' ἐν παντί ἐδνει ὁ φοβούμενος
αὐτόν καὶ ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην δεκτὸς αὐτῷ ἔστιν*

*God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation he who
fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

Acts 10:34-35¹

¹ This text not only means that personal goodwill is acceptable but also contains a definite cultic reference: God accepts the "sacrifices" of other religions.



STATUS QUAESTIONIS

*An Ecumenical Problem*¹

One of the most encouraging phenomena of our times is the widespread and sincere desire for mutual understanding, which is coupled with a genuine thirst for universality.² Geography and history are becoming ever more global, leaving behind the limited dimensions of the past.³ No individual or group—whether nation, race, culture, or religious confession—can be shut off from the rest of the world, locked up as it were in particularism, nationalism, regionalism, isolationism, or any other “ism” that denotes a lack of universality.⁴ This need for universality appears in many seemingly antithetical, but actually convergent, movements in which people are beginning to discover the danger of mere abstractions, generalizations, and uprootedness and becoming increasingly aware of the value of reality, the person, and our earthly roots.⁵ If we could develop the need for universality without neglecting reality, a very promising prospect would undoubtedly open before us.⁶ We cannot deny, of course,

¹ The original version of this second part dates back to the 1950s (long before Vatican Council II). We kept the text because it reflects the problems of the day and the difficulty of Christianity in considering itself as the only authentic form of religion. Today these problems appear to have been overcome, and this is evidence of the positive progress of the Catholic religion—which encourages us not to give up. Today I would use a different language, but it is useful also to illustrate the development. *Nova et vetera!*

² We are dealing with so vast a problem that we can only dedicate a few lines here to questions that should be developed in much more detail. To indicate how wide the context of our approach is, we have included further references in the notes and the bibliography, which may serve to help readers find their way through the dense jungle of modern literature relating to our subject.

³ See A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934–54); F. Heer, *Quellgrund dieser Zeit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1956); Heer, *Europäische Geistesgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953); C. Dawson, *Dynamics of World History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1957), and the classical works by P. Hazard, A. V. Randa, C. J. Burckhardt, Pirenne, etc.

⁴ See, for example, UNESCO, *Interrelations of Cultures: Their Contribution to International Understanding*, 1953; UNESCO, *Traditional Cultures*, Proceedings of the Seminar Organized by the University of Madras, University of Madras, 1956; UNESCO (comp.), *Freedom and Culture* (London: Wingate, 1951); Pax Romana, *La Culture et les Cultures*, Assemblée Generale et Session d'Etudes de Beyrouth, April 1956 (Beirut: UCIL, 1956); *Der Kongress für die Freiheit der Kultur, Wissenschaft und Freiheit*, Internationale Tagung (Hamburg-Berlin: Grunewald, 1954); *The Great Scriptures*, Papers Presented at the First Seminar of the Union for the Study of the Great Religions, ed. T. M. P. Mahadevan (Madras: G. S. Press, 1956).

⁵ See the works and the importance of authors such as E. Mounier, R. Guardini, T. Steinbüchel, G. Thibon, M. de Corte, S. Weil, E. Massis, and G. Marcel.

⁶ See F. Heer, *Begegnung mit dem Feinde* (Recklinghausen: Paulus, 1955).

that this trend toward a global perspective is still a privilege of few minorities. Due to socio-political and economic factors, most of the peoples of the earth are still absorbed in their own urgent local needs. At the same time, however, they long for the sort of liberation that may bring not only justice but also universality.

The Christian ecumenical movement is a prime example of this general trend, which will be crucial in shaping the future.⁷ The peoples of the world are becoming increasingly aware that their divisions and divergencies are untenable and are, therefore, sincerely striving to overcome them. At the same time, they are cautiously trying to steer clear of the facile compromises that are so easily produced by indifference toward the convictions of others and a lack of faithfulness to one's own.⁸

In an attempt to achieve a more authentic harmony, Christian ecumenism seeks a middle path that will enable dialogue and encounter between the different Christian confessions without imposing solutions in anticipation of the problems or compelling disloyalty to personal beliefs. In other words, true ecumenism is not minimalist, that is, it does not try to establish unity by relying on a minimum of indisputable points common to all, but maximalist, that is, it attempts to affirm unity on that higher level toward which all aspire. The danger of minimalism is clear; the only thing common to all, in fact, is matter. On a conceptual level, uniformity between two different sets of convictions is at best provisional, since the more complex concepts are, the more likely they are to diverge. As concerns the Mystery, the unmanifest, however, unity must almost by definition be authentic unity and cannot be conceptualized. There is a greater conceptual difference between, for example, St. Francis and St. Dominic, two Catholic saints of the same century, than between a lukewarm Roman Catholic and a lukewarm Methodist. There may be greater harmony and unity between the former pair than the latter pair, though there is less uniformity in the arrangement of the concepts. In fact, the higher one is on the scale of being, the greater the differentiation. We should bear in mind, for example, that the differences between the Persons of the Trinity are infinite (nothing can be finite in God) and yet their harmony and unity are absolute. We should clarify here that "unity," "oneness," the "One" referred to in philosophy, is not a number. God is neither one nor triune nor multiple. For a long time the term "harmony" has been avoided because it cannot be reduced to a concept, which is fundamental to reason and even more so to rationalism. Reason tells us when one concept is compatible with another (in that it is not contradictory), but it cannot "see" the harmony between the two notions. Harmony, on the other hand, is not subject to the principle of noncontradiction; it belongs to a different perception of our spirit. It should also be stressed that universality is not the same as unity, and God is not merely an omnipotent Substance, as we have pointed out elsewhere.

This leaning toward harmony can also be found in contemporary Hinduism, although the historical and "theological" situation of Hinduism is considerably different from that of Christianity. There has never been such a thing as "Hindū unity" or "unity of the Indic religions," because Hinduism is not a historical religion and therefore needs no founder, and even the Vedas themselves are not universally recognized. In spite of the great differences, however, there has always been a certain consciousness of harmony, similar to that of plants growing in the same soil (though at times this symbiosis can be negative). The challenges that

⁷ See the article by J. Corbon, "Pour un oecumenisme integral," *Proche Orient Chretien* 4 (1959). See also A. Kardinal Bea, *Der Okumenismus im Konzil* (Herder: Freiburg, 1969); and H. Fries, *Ökumene statt Konfessionen? Das Ringen der Kirche um Einheit* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1977).

⁸ Regarding ecumenical problems, see Y. M. J. Congar, J. Vajta, et al., *Vocabulaire oecuménique* (Paris: Cerf, 1970).

modernity presents to traditional religions, and the fact that different religions, sects, and schools are drawing closer together on all levels, are contributing to a general trend toward universality, both among the different traditions of Hinduism and with other religions. A number of *sampradāyas*, for example, not only work together on a sociopolitical level but also celebrate festivals and pilgrimages together.⁹ At the same time, they all try to respond to the problems of the present day and the changing of situations by transforming and being open to dialogue. One example of this is the movement that led to the opening of several temples to harijans and, in part, to non-Hindūs, thus allowing members of other religious communities to participate in ceremonies and worship. In this way even texts that were once reserved for the initiates of a particular community have been brought to the knowledge of nonmembers.¹⁰ This ecumenical movement at work within different religions is now in the process of broadening and deepening into an *ecumenical ecumenism*, so to speak—ecumenism that is truly universal, catholic, and committed, not only in the dialogue and encounter between Christian confessions or Hindū *sampradāyas*, but between different religions also.

This does not detract from, but rather explains, the fact that opposite reactions have multiplied recently, showing just how delicate the problem is and how greatly a philosophical-theological foundation is needed.

The disputes between the Latin and Greek churches, compared, for example, with the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism, appear almost as family quarrels that do not extend beyond the Mediterranean area.¹¹ While this observation has no intention of underemphasizing the importance of the Latin-Greek tension, it can certainly help to put it in its proper perspective. We must also bear in mind the fundamental differences between the problems that arise in encounters between Christians and those that arise in encounters between members of different religions.¹²

⁹ It is significant that a study on the different censuses of India from 1871 to 1991, carried out by A. P. Joshi et al., places together Hindūs, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and even Jews, and separates only Christians and Muslims. See F. X. Clooney, "Enlightening and Impetuous Criticism," 2004.

¹⁰ A most striking recent example of this "Hindū ecumenism" was the Second World Hindū Conference held in Allahabad in January 1979. The heads of religions and sects that had been fighting each other for centuries not only met peacefully but even invited the Dalai Lama to inaugurate the conference, in spite of the fact that until recently Buddhism had been considered one of the greatest enemies of Hinduism. It is quite significant that each one of these religious heads (including Sikhs and Jains) emphasized their own unity on the basis of their common heritage and in the face of the challenges with which religion is confronted today. These traditional *jagadgurus* unanimously agreed to abolish untouchability and caste distinctions in all practical religious matters (by law they were already abolished, but so long as the traditional religious leaders and the faithful continue to practice these distinctions, the law cannot be enforced). Yet in spite of this open, fraternal, and universal spirit it was quite clear that the different traditions did not intend to give up their own identity in favor of a "mixed Hindū syncretism." The relation between faithfulness to one's own tradition and openness seems not to be exclusive but, rather, inclusive.

¹¹ J. Corbon quite rightly points out that "an ecumenical vocation that limits itself solely to gathering together the baptised would not be faithful to the call of Christ within history" ("Ecumenismo e Mistero," *La Missione* 28 [1960], p.22). Christian ecumenism is only really universal when it is integrated into the very dynamism of history; otherwise it is not true ecumenism.

¹² For the ecumenical attitude, see the article by O. Karrer, "Ökumenische Katholizität," *Hochland* 4 (1959): pp. 297–314, and in relation to an authentic ecumenical spirit, see the remarkable writings by the German Protestants of the *Sammlung* (H. Asmussen, M. Lackmann, R. Baumann, W. Stalin, etc.), in *Istina* 1 (1959): pp. 93–106. See also Y. M.-J. Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Re-Union* (London: G. Bles, 1939).

In this chapter we will be looking more closely at the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity in this broader ecumenical context, though from the point of view of its formal aspect, without venturing further into concrete problems.

The "And" of the Relationship

This study of the relationship between these two religions represents just a small chapter in the philosophy, or rather theology, of religion.¹³ It implies, therefore, knowledge of what both Christianity and Hinduism are, based on ancient as well as modern sources.¹⁴

It may help us here to examine the value of the conjunction "and" that relates Hinduism and Christianity. Needless to say, a simple "and" can be extremely important; we may recall, in fact, that Eastern and Western Christian traditions have long debated about the meaning of another "and" in relation to the *filioque* controversy.

Before attempting any interpretation we would like to present the relationship in purely traditional Christian terms.¹⁵ Christ is the universal redeemer;¹⁶ there is no redemption except by him.¹⁷ Where there is no redemption there is no salvation. Therefore, any person who is saved (and we know by reason and by faith that God grants to all the necessary means for salvation) is saved through Christ, the only redeemer.¹⁸ In other words, Christ is present in one form or another in every human being who moves toward God.¹⁹

Although the church, in the mystical sense, may be considered as the sphere of action of Christ in the world, Christianity itself, or the church as an institution, is a concrete religion that claims to be the regular and common place of Christ's redeeming power and saving action.²⁰ What place, then, does Hinduism have in this salvific plan?²¹ There are two

¹³ Every believer experiences a healthy sense of uneasiness in presenting a mere list of books as an explanation of his beliefs, because living faith cannot adequately be expressed in any written form whatsoever. He knows his faith and lives by it and will only refer to one book or another according to the special circumstances in which he finds himself or in which he believes his partner in dialogue to be. This same uneasiness is also felt when we contemplate literature on Hinduism or Christianity. In reading the following notes, the reader should bear this in mind.

¹⁴ In such an endeavor certain generalizations are unavoidable. When speaking of "Hinduism" and "Christianity," we must not forget that these are two complex religions, concerning which many differentiations must be made. What we are analyzing here is their formal relationship.

¹⁵ Since the publication of this book, the ideas it expresses regarding the relationships between Christianity and the other religions of the world in the general economy of salvation have, on the whole, been accepted and developed in detail by various theologians. We do not intend to rewrite these pages since they represent, so to speak, a historical moment in this new theological understanding. For literature on the subject, see K. Rahner 1962, pp. 136–58; H. R. Schlette 1963; 1965, pp. 306–16; J. Heislbetz 1967; H. Küng 1967; H. Waldenfels 1969, pp. 257–78; H. Bürkle 1977; and the attached bibliography.

¹⁶ See Eph 1:3–14ff.

¹⁷ See Col 1:13–22ff.

¹⁸ See M. Schmaus, *Gott der Erlöser, Katholische Dogmatik* II.2 (Munich: M. Hueber, 1955), which will spare us from further references.

¹⁹ See K. Adam, *The Christ of Faith* (London: Burns & Oates, 1957).

²⁰ See M. Schmaus, "Die Lehre von der Kirche," in *Katholische Dogmatik* III.1 (Munich: M. Hueber, 1958); H. de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 5th ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1952).

²¹ See E. W. Thompson, *The Word of the Cross to Hindus* (Madras: CLS, 1956). We should make reference here to several articles that appeared in *Light of the East* by G. Dandoy and P. Johanns. Some of the articles by Johanns were published in book form: *To Christ through the Vedānta*. See also H. J. D'Souza, "Catholicism Meets Hinduism," *World Mission* 8(2) (Summer 1957): 64–80. (We do not fully

possible answers:²² either we exclude from Hinduism any possible action of Christ (meaning that Christ would save good Hindūs in spite of or even against their Hinduism), or we must somehow include Hinduism in the universal economy of salvation by God through Christ.²³ The second alternative does not deny, of course, that salvation is invariably a personal affair, nor, on the other hand, does it imply that Hinduism as a concrete historical religion has saving power²⁴—but then neither does Christianity as a whole. However, the question remains whether Hinduism as such has any place in the (Christian) economy of salvation.

In Hindū terms, Christianity, like other authentic religions, leads its followers to liberation insofar as it instills in their hearts the three central truths of the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion: that God is, that he can be reached, and that the purpose of life is to reach him. This reaching, this liberation, is *homeomorphic* with what Christians call salvation.²⁵

This study, nevertheless, tackles the question from a Christian perspective, because through the centuries Christians have felt the problem more acutely. Due to exclusivistic interpretations of the action of Christ, in fact, relations with the other religions have been extremely difficult. Our thesis attempts to formulate one aspect of the second alternative mentioned above; to find a way, that is, of integrating the Hindū and the Christian "economies" through the conjunction "and." This, *in nuce*, is the whole problem, since the expression "Hinduism and Christianity" itself does not seem immediately significant or problematic. In other words: is there really an "and" that links the two, and if so, in what sense does it do so?

share the optimism he expressed in 9(44): 62–74 of this same journal.) Since the first edition of this book, Vatican II has for the first time in the history of the Church expressed a positive and explicit evaluation of other religions in which Hinduism is expressly mentioned. See the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra aetate)* in *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), pp. 66–71. See also the commentaries, e.g., in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil 2* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), pp. 405–95; R. Panikkar, "Church and the World Religions," *Religion and Society* 14(2) (Bangalore 1967): pp. 59–63; R. Panikkar, "Christianity and the World Religions," *Christianity* (collective work) (Patiala: Punjabi University,), pp. 78–127; P. Schreiner, "Die Heiligkeit der Religionen und die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 56 (1972): pp. 108–22.

²² This problem was felt in Christianity from the very beginning. See the following text of the second century: "Here we have the following alternatives: either the Lord cares not for all men—which might arise from incapacity (but this it is forbidden to say, for incapacity is a mark of weakness), or from want of will on the part of one possessed with power (but such an affection is incompatible with goodness . . .)—or he has regard for us all, which also befits him who was made Lord of all. For he is the savior not of one here and another there, but to the extent of each man's fitness, he distributed his own bounty both to Greeks and to barbarians, and to the faithful and elect . . ." (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* II.6, trans. J. B. Mayor, J. E. L. Oulton, and H. Chadwick in *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics II [London: SCM, 1954], pp. 96–97).

²³ See O. Karrer, *Das Religiöse in der Menschheit und das Christentum*. See the articles on concrete topics by J. Monchanin, "Yoga et hesychasme, Apophatisme et Apavāda"; and A. Barea, "L'Absolu dans le bouddhisme," *Entretiens* (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1955); F. König, ed., *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, 3 vols., especially the last study by the editor, "Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen," III:731–76; B. Kelly, *Notes on the Light of the Eastern Religions in Dominican Studies* (1954): pp. 254–71.

²⁴ We shall return to this problem.

²⁵ See M. Dhavarnony in *Studia Missionaria* 29 (1980) on "Salvation," pp. 209ff.

INITIAL APPROACHES

We begin the discussion on a negative note by eliminating interpretations of the relationship that we believe to be inadequate, and follow up by offering positive suggestions on how to view the relationship in a way that will neither contradict the doctrines nor (hopefully) offend Hindū or Christian sensibilities.

Most missionary studies today are beginning to reconsider the theological justification of missions.¹ The negative part of the discussion may, therefore, seem outdated and no longer necessary in these days of changing attitudes. These older views are still valid, however, and form the concrete historical background of our discussion, since they are the views that originally created the conditions for the encounter of Christianity with other religions. They must be taken into due consideration, therefore, if only for the sake of illustrating the evolution of Christian thought.

The relationship between Hinduism and Christianity finds in the conjunction *and* a more or less adequate expression, in that *and* itself, being neutral, does not favor either of the two terms. Hence the polar opposites such as falsehood-truth, darkness-light, sin-sanctity, damnation-salvation, and even natural-supernatural are not implicit in the simple conjunction, though they have long been used among Christians to characterize Hinduism and Christianity, respectively. After years of contact I consider another kind of characterization, mutually more sympathetic, to be more satisfactory, namely such dynamic pairs as potency-act, seed-fruit, forerunner-real presence, symbol-reality, desire-realization, and allegory-thing in itself.²

The relationship we are examining here, therefore, is a *sui generis*, peculiar relationship that is separate from and cannot be included in any other.³ For the sake of comprehension, however, it has traditionally been expressed by *analogy* with other pairs such as those listed above, even though it cannot adequately be classified under any of them.⁴ Herein lies the problem.

¹ See, for example, G. Evers, *Mission—Nichtchristliche Religionen—Weltliche Welt*, and J. Schütte, ed., *Mission nach dem Konzil*.

² See K. Klostermaier, *Kristvidya* (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1967), p. 11: "the *actus-potentia* scheme would not lead us very far, but it may be a starting point for a certain way of thinking."

³ For the praxis of the church on this subject, see A. V. Seumois, *La papauté et les missions au cours des six premiers siècles*, Église Vivante (Paris, 1951), and G. Bardy, *La conversion au Christianisme durant les premiers siècles* (Paris: Aubier, 1949).

⁴ See the first Christian treatise on the salvation of non-Christians, written around 450 by Prosper of Aquitaine, *Duo libri de vocatione omnium gentium*, especially the translation and study by P. de Letter, *St. Prosper of Aquitaine: The Call of All Nations*, Ancient Christian Writers 14 (London: Longmans, 1952).

Before specifying what I personally believe is the true relationship between the two religions, let us examine the implications and limitations, in today's world, of the two kinds of characterizations that have been considered valid in our recent past.

SIN AND SANCTITY; ERROR AND TRUTH

The relationship between Hinduism and Christianity cannot be a relationship of opposites, as past missionary approaches maintained, almost as if one embodied sin and the other sanctity, one falsehood and the other truth.

First of all, these opposites are too static. Between sin and sanctity, darkness and light, or any two such watertight concepts it is not possible to envisage any sort of bridge or passage. To define a religion as a religion of sin or a vehicle of darkness (or damnation or falsehood) is the same as saying that it is not actually a religion at all. The goal of every religion is the salvation or liberation of Man, and salvation means union with God; the divinization of our being; the acquisition of truth, sanctity, and light; and liberation from the bonds of injustice, slavery, the passions of worldly existence, and so on. To define a religion as sin or darkness is to define it as a nonreligion, a would-be religion lacking the power that is characteristic of the phenomena of religions.¹

Furthermore, since few human minds would choose falsehood over truth and darkness rather than light (and, thus, sin instead of sanctity or damnation instead of salvation), we might conclude that anyone who recognizes his own religion as false would not follow its teachings or embrace its doctrine. If Hinduism is, in fact, darkness, it is clear that its followers do not recognize it as such. This, then, is a one-sided judgment that must be justified by those who make it.²

Again, if Hinduism were judged by Christianity to be error and falsehood, not only would a Hindū be repelled by such an irrational attitude, but he should not even accept it on theoretical grounds.³ How can he believe that a loving God and merciful redeemer, such as he is claimed to be by both religions, was so unjust, so cruel, even, as to allow mankind to remain in utter darkness and falsehood until the time of its encounter with Christianity? Even if the Hindū were prepared, in all humility, to acknowledge his own sins, how could he ever believe that all the glorious saints of Hinduism (perhaps some of them his ancestors) were mere impostors, both deceivers and deceived, rogues and doomed souls? He would justifiably come to the conclusion that such a Christian God is extremely partial, indeed not much better than the jealous God of some passages of the Old Testament, and that the Christian concept is certainly inferior to the sublime concept of God in the Indic tradition.

¹ This deep conviction is manifest in the theologies of K. Barth and H. Kraemer, which see religions as merely the impotent work of Man and deny that the Christian movement or faith is a "religion." See K. Barth, "Gottes Offenbarung als Aufhebung der Religion," in *Kirchliche Dogmatik* 1/2.17 (Zollikon-Zürich, 1938), pp. 304-97; H. Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* and *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*.

² This is the ground of the once-accepted hypothesis that God saves those who are (according to those who uphold this unilateral view) in unsurmountable error!

³ See S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927).

THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Another far from positive paradigm is the alleged distinction between Hinduism as a natural religion and Christianity as a supernatural religion. We will not venture here into purely theological discussions that have already challenged the validity of this distinction outside the epistemological sphere (since, in fact, "natural-supernatural" primarily refers to two types of understanding).¹ To apply these terms to two distinct historical religions would be an illegitimate extrapolation. We discard this hypothesis on other grounds also.

First of all, if true religion is considered to be "supernatural," a "natural" religion is a contradiction in terms. Either it is religion, that is, a way of life that leads to the achieving of Man's goal (whatever it may be), and then it is "supernatural" (exceeding the boundaries of the factual human situation), or it is no religion at all. In these terms, in fact, salvation marks the transition or passage from natural to supernatural, the transformation or radical change from natural Man to supernatural, divinized person—the rupture of planes.

Christianity may be "supernatural" in a specific sense, but Hinduism cannot be defined as a natural religion in the sense of being just a product of nature. This would reduce it to being a mere projection of the human mind.² The term "natural" also holds too many reminiscences of the naturalism of past centuries. Even if we were to affirm that Hinduism is a creation of the human mind, is not every human mind enlightened by God, "the true Light which lights every man that comes into the World"?³ It would not be simply a "natural" mind, but rather a fallen mind which, like every existing mind, is already experiencing the call of Christ, for he died for the whole of Mankind.⁴ The human being may, therefore, be either fallen or

¹ See First Vatican Council, Session III (Const. *de fide*), especially chap. 4 (Denz. 1795, etc.). See also H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946); de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

² See the remarkable (if at times excessively dualistic) collective work by A. Chavasse, J. Frisque, H. Denis and R. Garnier, *Église et Apostolat*, Église Vivante (Paris: Casterman, 1953).

³ Jn. 1:9.

⁴ See chapter IV of the Synod of Quiercy: "Christus . . . sicut nullus homo est, fuit vel erit, cuius natura in illo assumpta non fuerit, ita nullus est, fuit vel erit homo, pro quo passus non fuerit . . ." [There is no man and never has been or will be whose nature has not been assumed in Jesus Christ our Lord; similarly there is none nor has been or will be for whom he has not suffered his passion, even though not all are redeemed by the mystery of his passion] Denz. 319. See a traditional text: "Sed sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur [cf. 1 Cor 15:22]. Itaque sicut primitiae mortis in Adam, ita etiam primitiae resurrectionis in Christo omnes resurgent . . . Omnes quidem resurgent, sed unusquisque, ut ait Apostolus (ibid., 23), in suo ordine. Communis est divinae fructus clementiae, sed distinctus ordo meritum" [For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive [cf. 1 Cor 15:22]. Therefore, as the first-fruits of death are in Adam, so also the first-fruits of the resurrection are in Christ, in whom all will rise again. . . . All indeed will rise again, but, as the Apostle says [ibid., 23], each in his order. The fruit of the divine goodness is common to all, but the order of merits is different] (Ambrose, *De fide resurrectionis* [apud Brev. Rom. lect. v, dom. V p. Pascha]).

redeemed, but not simply "natural."⁵ Or, to be more precise, Man's "existential condition" is not merely "fallen," because the mystery of the cross has a universal efficacy; yet neither is it simply "redeemed" or supernatural, since the effects of redemption have not yet been fully accepted or acknowledged.⁶ Let us not forget that we are now dealing with the *human spirit* facing ultimate religious problems, not just technical or mathematical questions of the natural realm wherein the "natural" *human mind* has its *ontonomy*.

Finally, the natural-supernatural dichotomy and its subclasses of opposites are not applicable to Hinduism and Christianity, respectively, because the proper place for these distinctions is within each human being (Hindū or Christian) who is in the process of conversion from merely "created" structures to the living God who calls him to share his own life.⁷ Nowadays this terminology has been all but abandoned for other (plausible) reasons.

⁵ See R. Panikkar, 1955/1, pp. 25–32.

⁶ See the distinction between an "objective or potential" and a "subjective or actual" redemption in U. Lattanzi, *Il primato universale di Cristo secondo le S. Scritture* (Rome: Lateran, 1937), p. 57.

⁷ "Whatever concerns man's exit from God may be called the natural order; and whatever has regard to man's return to God may be called the supernatural order" (G. M. Dupont, *Foundation for a Devotion to the Blessed Trinity* [Calcutta: The Oriental Institute, 1947], p. 132). See Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d.14, q.2, a.2.

INADEQUACIES OF THE SUPERIORITY APPROACH

We do not want to exclude out of hand the possibility that, from a particular viewpoint, one of the two religions may be better than the other. Obviously this point of view will be relative, that is, dependent upon a certain set of convictions or doctrines that will require critical examination. Even this, however, in no way justifies a superiority approach, as if the sociological complex called Christianity were actually superior to the other socioreligious complex called Hinduism. Three sets of considerations prevent us from adopting such an attitude: (a) the psychological/pastoral: a superiority approach is contrary to religious honesty as well as to what may be called the "Christian spirit"; (b) the historical: history provides no evidence for it; and (c) the theological: the superiority approach is not consistent with Christian theology.

Psychological and Pastoral Inadequacy

Whoever maintains that Christianity and Hinduism are to be assessed on a comparative basis (true/less true, superior/inferior) automatically shuts the door to any communication and any understanding.¹ Nothing could be more distant from the Christian spirit.

Christ, certainly, came to teach: he is the Master.² He taught, however, by his own example and by parables, by being open to the exigencies of the truth and by serving instead of being served³—not by preaching "at" people and claiming to "have" the truth. Nothing is so dangerous in the Christian apostolate as the paternalistic attitude and false security of one who thinks he is in full possession of the truth.⁴ The true Christian (as also the true Hindū) possesses nothing, not even the truth. Rather, he is possessed by the truth, as Thomas Aquinas points out.⁵ He knows God because he is known by him.⁶ This makes the truly religious Man uncompromising in his attitude toward error. He cannot yield an inch⁷ from a truth of which he feels himself to be the servant, yet he does not feel that he belongs to an "exclusive bourgeois club" that sits comfortably on the "true way" and condescends to point

¹ See J. Levie, *Sois les yeux de l'incroyant*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946).

² See Jn 13:14ff.

³ See Mt 20:28; Phil 2:7.

⁴ See H. Dumery, "La tentation de faire du bien," *Esprit*, January 1955, pp. 134.

⁵ *I Metaphys* 3 (Nr. 64).

⁶ Gal 4:9; cf. 1 Cor 8:3.

⁷ See the typical utterance of Tertullian—which has to be rightly understood in its context: "After one has believed, there is but one thing more to believe, namely that there is nothing more to believe" (*De praescriptione haereticorum* 9).

out the path of salvation to others.⁸ Rather, he is a pilgrim seeking his way, trying to pass in at the narrow gate,⁹ going with fear and trembling,¹⁰ humbly checking his beliefs and acts so that he himself may not be "a castaway" even while preaching the true doctrine to others, as St. Paul himself feared.¹¹ He is aware of the perilous nature of spiritual life, knowing that the fact of having eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord,¹² or of having cried "Lord, Lord,"¹³ or even of having performed miracles in his name,¹⁴ will not save him. His example,¹⁵ service to others,¹⁶ and service of the Word,¹⁷ by which he imparts the doctrine that he has received¹⁸ and of which he has no power to modify so much as an iota,¹⁹ is what the Christian offers to the World. The privilege of the Christian faith, if we wish to term it thus, is only a vocation to a special service.²⁰ The Christian way is always one of co-redemption.²¹ It is a way of friendship, according to the example and the explicit teaching of Christ himself, and friendship presupposes mutual communication, confidence, and a certain equality.²² Where this does not exist, no communication is possible, and without it there is no kerygma, no proclamation of the Word, no transmitting of faith.²³ And where communication does not arise, communion is not possible. Hence, even from a psychological point of view, such an attitude of superiority and exclusiveness is incompatible with the Christian duty of apostolate.²⁴

Further, a religion is an organic set of beliefs and practices that can only change through natural growth from within and not merely by external imitation or artificial imposition. It has often been remarked that Hinduism, despite having an excellent relationship with Western Christianity, does not like to be imitated. It makes a stand against so-called Christian adaptation because, on the assumption that Christian missionaries really believed Hinduism to be falsehood, such adaptation could only be an expedient for ushering in foreign beliefs in a familiar guise. It amounts to hypocrisy and even dishonesty to appropriate the shell of a religion without knowing its kernel, which is the *raison d'être* of the shell. This is what alienates the Hindū and makes him dislike intrusion, imitation, adaptation.²⁵ Even if Christians express interest in assimilating the positive values of Hinduism, it is seen as robbery by the orthodox

⁸ See Mt 23:1ff.

⁹ Lk 13:24.

¹⁰ Phil 2:12.

¹¹ 1 Cor 9:27.

¹² Lk 13:26.

¹³ Mt 7:21.

¹⁴ Mt 7:22-23.

¹⁵ Mt 5:16ff.

¹⁶ Lk 10:37.

¹⁷ Acts 6:4.

¹⁸ Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16.

¹⁹ Mt 5:17-20.

²⁰ See Jn 13:13-17.

²¹ See R. Panikkar, "The Relation of Christians to Their Non-Christian Surroundings," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, ed. J. Neuner, pp. 143-84.

²² See Jn 15:14ff.

²³ Rom 10:17.

²⁴ See Jn 10:1ff.; Mt 10:16ff.

²⁵ Nothing is more delicate than collective psychology. Cultures and religions have a psychological component but cannot be reduced to psychological factors. For an acquaintance with Indian mentality, see the works of R. Kipling, Mahatma Gandhi, R. Tagore, R. K. Narayan, M. R. Anand, A. K. Coomaraswamy, C. F. Andrews, G. M. Carstairs, et al.

Hindū because these Christians are not likely to know Hinduism from within, to know the heart, the core from which those same values grew.²⁶ Similarly it would be futile and merely superficial if Hinduism were simply to adopt certain characteristic features of Christianity, if those features had not evolved out of the heart of Hinduism nor were an expression of a deep experience of the reality of Christianity. Yet we can learn from each other.²⁷

Historical Experience

The superiority approach cannot in any sense stand the test of history. Even the most elementary history seems to prove beyond any doubt that the history of Christian nations and even that of Christianity itself has not always been a model of righteousness and virtue, nor has the relationship between Christians and non-Christians throughout history been a charitable and merciful encounter.²⁸ If it had been so, the difference between the history of Christian peoples and that of other cultures would have been so strikingly clear as to leave no doubt about the superiority of Christianity. But the fact is that history cannot be accounted a witness in favor of Christianity.²⁹

Moreover, it is inappropriate in this context to cite the unworthiness of individual Christians in order to save the "worth" of Christianity,³⁰ because the question is not so much whether Christians are good or bad Christians according to a theoretically pure Christianity, but whether Christianity as a whole—including its history—stands with regard to Hinduism as a whole in such a superior position that the analogy of the positive-negative pairs mentioned above is an accurate characterization of their relationship.

Certainly, some forms of popular Hinduism may be full of superstition, degraded features and impurities. But the history of Christianity also is not exempt from such features. Furthermore, an impartial history would find it hard to deny that Hinduism also presents miracles and stupendous facts such as are recorded in the history of Christianity. It is an accepted

²⁶ See G. Dandoy, *Catholicism and Natural Cultures*, Light of the East Series 27 (Calcutta, 1939).

²⁷ It would be worthwhile to make a study of the deep meaning of idolatry, showing how it could impart a richer meaning to the Christian ideas of presence and adoration. On a parallel issue, see the inspiring book by J. Lacroix, *Sens de l'athéisme* (Tournay: Casterman, 1958). Hints can also be found, for instance, in M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), pp. 25–30; and in his *Images et symboles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952). See also A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (London: Luzac, 1946), pp. 216–46; G. van der Leeuw, *L'homme primitif et la religion* (Paris: P.U.F., 1940); A. le Roy, *La religion des primitives* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1925); S. Levi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas*, Bibl. Hautes Etudes (Paris: E. Leroux, 1898); cf. R. Panikkar, "Eucharistischer Glaube und Idolatrie," *Kairos* 2 (1961); R. Panikkar, *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le Christianisme*.

²⁸ See Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1957). For a systematic survey, see *Histoire universelle des missions catholiques*, 2 vols., ed. Delacroix (Paris: Grund, 1956–57). See also the following general works: J. T. Addison, *The Medieval Missionary*, Studies in the World Mission of Christianity 11 (New York: I.M.C., 1936); J. Glazik, *Die russisch-orthodoxe Heidenmission seit Peter dem Grossen in Ein missionsgeschichtlicher Versuch nach Quellen und Darstellung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1954); K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1937–45).

²⁹ See, as typical examples, S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*; K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955). See also, in a different line altogether, Th. Ohm, *Asiens Nein und Ja zum westlichen Christentum*; Ohm, *Asiens Kritik am abendländischen Christentum* (Munich: Kösel, 1948).

³⁰ See N. Berdyayev, *De la dignité du Christianisme et de l'indignité des chrétiens* (Paris, 1931).

Christian idea that the history of Christianity presents undeniable proofs of a very special providence, especially as regards the prophecies before Christ and the miracles after him.³¹ But nowhere in Christian doctrine is it said that in order to extol the merits of Christianity we should hide, minimize, or deny the merits of other religions.³²

The spiritual history of Hinduism is full of instances parallel to that of Christ finding in the non-Jewish woman³³ or in the Roman officer³⁴ more faith than in the house of Israel.³⁵

The spiritual history of both past and present Hinduism records instances of true virtue, real sanctity, authentic mysticism, undeniable miracles, and true charity.³⁶ If any Western Christian should read these lines with a touch of skepticism I would invite him to consider for himself the life witness of other religions.³⁷ "Where do you dwell, Lord?" "Come and see!"³⁸ Only then, after having seen, can we tackle the theological problem of grace and mysticism outside Christianity or within Christianity itself.³⁹

Though salvation ultimately takes place in the unfathomable depths of the human person, the normal divine preparation for this ultimate step uses the more tangible channels of the established religions.⁴⁰

³¹ See *Conc. Trid.* III.3 (Denz.-Schön. 1798), and *Sacrorum antistitum* I (January 1910) (Denz.-Schön. 2145).

³² See Exod 22:28 (though it could be interpreted along the lines of Acts 23:5).

³³ Mt 15:28.

³⁴ Mt 8:10; Lk 7:9.

³⁵ The last word of Matins on the last day of the liturgical year in the Latin rite seems to be a rebuke of Israel and an acceptance of the "peoples": "Non est mihi voluntas in vobis, dicit Dominus exercituum, et munus non suscipiam de manu vestra; ab ortu enim solis usque ad occasum magnum est nomen meum in gentibus et in omni loco sacrificatur et offertur nomini meo oblatio munda, quia magnum est nomen meum in gentibus, dicit Dominus exercituum" (Mal. 1:10 [*Mat. Sabbat infra Hebdom. V Novembris, lect. 3*]). "I am not pleased with you, says Yahweh Sabaoth; from your hands I find no offerings acceptable. But from farthest east to farthest west my name is honoured among the nations and everywhere a sacrifice of incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering too, since my name is honoured among the nations, says Yahweh Sabaoth" (Jerusalem Bible).

³⁶ See J. Monchanin and H. Le Saux, *Ermities du Saccidainanda*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Casterman, 1957); Abhishiktesvarānanda, "Le monachisme chrétien aux Indes," *La Vie spirituelle* supp. 38 (September 15, 1956), pp. 288–316. See also S. N. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1927). For Śāṅkara's biography, see M. Piantelli, *Śāṅkara e la rinascita del brahmanesimo* (Fossano: Editrice Esperienze, 1974).

³⁷ See Abhishiktesvarānanda, "L'hindouisme est-il toujours vivant?" *La Vie intellectuelle* 11 (1956): pp. 2–40; the entire issue is dedicated to Hinduism. See also vol. 12 (1956), on "Vitalité des religions non-chrétiennes."

³⁸ Jn 1:38–39.

³⁹ See a single reference, which embraces the Old and the Middle Ages: "Et Augustinus 1. VII Conf (c. 9, n. 1) dicit se in libris Platonis legisse in principio erat verbum et magnam partem huius primi capituli Iohannis" [And Augustine 1. VII Conf. (c. 9, n. 1) says that he has read in the writings of Plato *In the beginning was the word* along with a great part of this first chapter of John] (M. Eckhart, *Expositio in Ioan.* [initium], no. 2 [Quint's Critical Ed., p. 4]). See also "Dubitandum non est et gentes suos habere prophetas!" (It is not to be doubted that the nations also have their own prophets) (August., *Contra Faustum* XIX.2 [PL 42.348]).

⁴⁰ See W. Bierbaum, "Geschichte als Paidagogia Theou—Die Heilsgeschichtslehre des Klemens von Alexandrien," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1954): pp. 246–72.

Theological Reflection

The superiority approach (and, a fortiori, that which views the relation between Christianity and Hinduism as one of opposition between two poles) is contradicted even by the principles of Christian theology.

Two propositions are universally accepted by Christian theology: one, that salvation comes exclusively through Christ,⁴¹ and two, that God does not condemn anyone.⁴² Now, this second proposition amounts to saying that God provides every Man coming into existence with the *means* for attaining salvation.⁴³

We have mentioned God's universal will to save.⁴⁴ Now if God created Man to be in union with him, he must also have provided him with the means whereby to attain this end.⁴⁵ If these means were to be found exclusively in the visible Church or in "official" Christianity, others could not be saved; but this, in fact, is not so even in official Christianity.⁴⁶ If it were true that "outside the church there is no salvation," this "church" should not be identified with a concrete organization, or even with adherence to Christianity.⁴⁷ The problem has been so explicitly stated that we need do no more than simply refer to it.⁴⁸

The ultimate reason for this universal idea of Christianity, an idea that makes possible the Catholic embrace of every people and religion, lies in the Christian conception of Christ: he is not *only* the historical redeemer, but *also* the unique Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, the only ontological—temporal and eternal—link between God and the World.⁴⁹

⁴¹ This does not mean at all that those who psychologically do not know Christ should be damned. The following quotation is typical of this misunderstanding (it obviously does not agree with the Orthodox Christian doctrine): "Augustine's teaching that only a small fraction of humanity, the elect, are destined to bliss while the many are 'reprobate,' predetermined to everlasting damnation, is contradicted by the law of *karma* which affirms that by doing what is in our power we can dispose the mind to the love of the Eternal and attain salvation. Man's instinctive sense of justice is bewildered by the bland relegation of a large part of humanity to everlasting torment" (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sutra*, pp. 196–97). As a matter of fact, most of the traditional religions of the world have believed that only a small portion of humankind reaches salvation, *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, *satori*, and the like.

⁴² See the theological dictum: *faciunt, quod est in se Deus non denegat gratiam* [God does not deny grace to those who do what they can].

⁴³ See the *rejection* by the Catholic Church of the doctrines that claim that "sanctifying grace" belongs exclusively to Christians and that non-Christians cannot benefit in any way from the action of Christ, or that Christ made his sacrifice only for "believers" (Denz. 1294, 1379, etc.).

⁴⁴ 1 Tim 2:3–4; cf. R. Lombardi, *The Salvation of the Unbeliever* (London: Burns & Oates, 1956); M. Seckler, "Das Heil der Nichtevangelisierten in thomistischer Sicht," *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift* 140(1) (1960): 3869; and K. Rahner, art. cit. (note 16).

⁴⁵ See A. P. Arokiasamy, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Śaiva Siddhānta*, Pont. Kandensi-Diss. ad Lauream (Trichinopoly: Sr. Joseph's, 1935); C. B. Papali, "Il concetto della Grazia nella Teologia Indu," *Il Fuoco* I (1963): pp. 3–8; R. Otto, *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted* (New York: Macmillan, 1930); P. de Letter, *The Christian and Hindu Concept of Grace*, Light of the East Series 51 (Calcutta, 1958).

⁴⁶ See the document by Pius IX, *Quanto confidamur munere* (August 10, 1863); see Denz. 1677.

⁴⁷ See C. Journef, *The Church of the Word Incarnate*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1954).

⁴⁸ See a short review of some relevant literature in *Herder Korrespondenz* IX 7 (April 1955): pp. 321–27; and Y. Congar, "Salvation and the Non-Catholic," *Blackfriars* 7–8 (1957): pp. 290–300; and another bibliographical review in "Parole et Mission" 2(4) (January 1, 1959): pp. 142–46. See the rather negative J. C. Fenton, *The Catholic Church and Salvation* (London: Sands, 1958).

⁴⁹ See the seventy pages of bibliography on Christology in B. M. Xiberta, *Tractatus de Verbo*

However, when the mystical insight into the theandric nature of Christ weakens and is replaced by a merely historical understanding of the human actions of Jesus, then this Christian position appears untenable. When the myth of history begins to take possession of Western Christianity, Jesus Christ becomes the embodiment of the supreme Imperium.

The theological problem that our question raises concerns the *means* of salvation that God provides for so-called non-Christians, that is, in our case, for Hindūs.⁵⁰ Undoubtedly, since the act of salvation is above natural forces (in that it is union with God), it is therefore always a gratuitous divine act, and there are no adequate "natural" means here on earth for attaining participation in divine life. Even the normal procedure of divine providence in dealing with the whole creation, including Mankind, is not one of anarchical interference, but rather follows a pattern that is manifest in what we call the physical and the historical order. This happens in such a perfect way that very often it appears as though God's personal and individual care for each of his creatures is somehow left to cosmic or historical laws far removed from his concrete love for each of us, which even goes so far as numbering every hair on our head.⁵¹

In other words, his providence follows the natural and customary order of things,⁵² and in this sense, he uses normal, natural means for leading peoples and individuals to himself.⁵³

The normal and ordinary means within the Christian church are the sacraments, which are different aspects, "signs," or symbols of the one and only sacrament of the New Testament, which is the church as a whole and, ultimately, Christ himself.⁵⁴ By virtue of their divine institution, those sacraments, when received with the proper dispositions, confer the divine grace that they symbolize.⁵⁵

Though it is not necessary here to linger on the doctrine of the "cosmic sacraments," a few observations should be made. If we take the concept of sacrament not in the restricted sense used by the church in referring to the sacraments of the New Law⁵⁶ (to distinguish them from *other* sacraments) but in a more general sense, as applied by Christian Scholastics when speaking of the sacraments of the Old Testament and of the *sacramenta naturae* (sacraments

Incarnato II (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1954), and the forty pages in M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* II.2.

⁵⁰ See the problem posed by H. R. Schlette, "Die 'alten Heiden' und die Theologie," *Hochland* 52(5) (1960): 411. See his book *Toward a Theology of Religions*.

⁵¹ Mt 10:30; Lk 12:7.

⁵² In relation to the people of Israel, cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); L. Bouyer, *La Bible et l'Evangile*, 2nd ed., *Lectio divina* 8 (Paris: Cerf, 1953), p. 33; F. Spadafora, *Collettivismo e individualismo nel Vecchio Testamento* (Rome, 1953); L. Cerfaux, *La théologie de l'Eglise suivant saint Paul* (Paris: Cerf, 1948); A. Gelin, *Les idées maitresses de l'Ancien Testament*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1952).

⁵³ See R. Garrigou-Lagrange, "La volonté salvifique chez saint Augustin," *Revue Thomiste* 35 (1930): pp. 473–86; F. Stegmüller, *Die Lehre vom allgemeinen Heilswillen in der Scholastik bis Thomas von Aquin* (Rome, 1929); L. Caperan, *Le problème du salut des infidèles*, 2nd ed. (Toulouse, 1943); J. Ratzinger, "Die neuen Heiden und die Kirche," *Hochland* 51(10) (October 1958): pp. 1–11; K. Rahner, "Der Christ und seine unglaublichen Verwandten," in *Schriften zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1956), pp. 419–39, and his other works quoted above.

⁵⁴ See Eph 1:4–9; 3:3–6; Col 1:26; 2:2. See H. de Lubac, "Le sacrement de Jesus-Christ," *Méditation sur l'Eglise*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Aubier, 1953), pp. 175–203. See also *The Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 9–106.

⁵⁵ See A. Amaldoss, *Do Sacraments Change?* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1979), for a theological reflection on the nature of the sacraments in an Indian context.

⁵⁶ See Conc. Trident., Sess VII, *De Sacramentis* (Denz. 844 sq.).

of nature),⁵⁷ then we may well say that *sacraments* are the ordinary means by which God leads the peoples of the earth toward himself.⁵⁸

No true sacrament is magical,⁵⁹ yet the sacraments have a special causative power due to their extrinsic connection with God. Thus the power of the Christian sacraments does not reside in themselves as isolated elements or actions, but depends on the action of Christ within them as instruments of grace.⁶⁰ We may or may not assume, therefore, that the same power is conferred upon all other sacraments, *qua sacraments*,⁶¹ yet it remains true that Christ may effectively act and operate within any human being who receives any sacrament, whether Christian or not.⁶²

Furthermore, because the human person is not just an individual⁶³ but also has a sociological, historical, and cosmological dimension, salvation, though a deep and personal process, is prepared and normally carried out by external and visible means that we call sacraments.⁶⁴ The *bona fide* Hindū, just as the *bona fide* Christian, is saved by Christ—not by Hinduism or Christianity *per se*, but through their sacraments and, ultimately, through the *mysterion* that is active within the two religions.⁶⁵ This amounts to saying that Hinduism also has a place in the universal saving providence of God and cannot therefore be considered as negative in relation to Christianity.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 102, a. 5; and III, q. 60–61.

⁵⁸ "R.d.q. *Sacramenta sunt necessaria ad humanam salutem* . . ." (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* III, q. 61, a. 1); also *ante Christum*, a. 3.

⁵⁹ See R. Panikkar, *Kulmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum*, pp. 72ff., 84ff., etc.

⁶⁰ "The sacraments when presented scientifically can appear as mechanical instruments of grace (*ex opere operato*) instead of the personal acts of Christ using this means to unite mankind with the Father by the loving power of the Holy Spirit. (The term *ex opere operato*, properly understood, means *ex opere operantis Christi*)" (E. Zeidler, "Our Liturgical Programme," *The Clergy Monthly* 5 [July 1959]: p. 175).

⁶¹ Traditional Christian doctrine emphasizes the distinction between the sacraments of the New Covenant and all other sacraments (cf. Denz. 845; 857) and points out that those of the Old Law did not bring about grace (cf. Denz. 695) but just foreshadowed it: *figurabant, praesignarunt* (see Denz. 711).

⁶² For the Hindū sacraments, see R. B. Pandey, *Hindū Saṃskāras: A Socio-religious Study of the Hindū Sacraments* (Banaras: Vikrama Publications, 1919).

⁶³ See R. Panikkar, "Sur l'anthropologie du prochain," in *L'homme et son prochain*, Actes du VIII^e Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (Toulouse: P.D.F., 1956), pp. 228–31; and also "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, art. cit. on p. 15. See K. Rahner, "Das Christentum und die nichtchristlichen Religionen," art. cit., pp. 148ff., etc.

⁶⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *loco cit.*

⁶⁵ By sacraments in Hinduism we are not referring solely to the *saṃskāras*, which are losing momentum in modern Hinduism, but also to other means, signs, and symbols provided by Hinduism. The powerful influence of tantrism, with its basically sacramental approach, on most of the branches of Hinduism, besides the almost universally accepted customs such as bathing in sacred rivers, etc., could be mentioned as examples.

⁶⁶ See the patristic idea of a church since the beginning of the world. For a collection of texts on the subject, see M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* III.1, sec. 167b, pp. 60–75; J. Beumer, "Die altchristliche Idee einer präexistierenden Kirche," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 9 (1942): pp. 12–22; Y. Congar, "Ecclesia ab Abel," in *Festschrift für Karl Adam: Abhandlungen zur Theologie und Kirche*, ed. M. Reding (Düsseldorf, 1953), pp. 79–108; A. M. Dubarle, "Les conditions du salut avant la venue du Sauveur chez saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 32 (1948): pp. 359–62; Ch. Journet, "L'univers de création ou l'univers antérieur à l'Eglise," *Revue Thomiste* 3 (1953): pp. 439–87ff. See also the surprising yet traditional text by Paul of Samosata in Mansi, *Amplis-*

As we have seen, it is not just the Hindū's personal conscience that is concerned; the Hindū religion as such has also an important role to play, because only through its mediation can the Hindū attain his goal. In India, in fact, as in many other past and present cultures, the individual, or the individual's separate awareness as it is comprehended in the West today, is almost inconceivable. Hence a private, personal relationship with God cannot be postulated as the normal and common way for everyone. This means that the hypothesis of *direct and immediate* action by Christ on an individual's conscience without the mediation of a particular religion as a medium—that is, without "sacraments"—is, to say the least, psychologically extremely difficult and unlikely in the majority of religions.⁶⁷ The purely individualistic attitude of nineteenth-century Europe is still unthinkable to the Indic people. It is difficult to find in India a concept that corresponds to the Western idea of "individual conscience." In Hinduism, Man is immersed in a collective conscience; he (still) has cosmic instincts that lead him through life with a greater certainty than that of a "modern" man with his own "private" reason.⁶⁸ This does not mean that the *kaivalya* ideal does not exist in Hinduism. On the contrary, in few religions has the desire for salvation through absolute detachment been given as much importance as in Hinduism—yet here also "isolation" implies universalization and not "individualization."⁶⁹

The fact that Christ speaks to the whole Man means that He does not address an abstract and common nature, but individuals whose very being is connected to and inseparable from their beliefs and customs, ways of thinking and feeling, and so forth.⁷⁰ Man is constitutively a historical and social being with cosmological dimensions, and Christ does not overlook this human dimension. He himself, in his day, lived and behaved as a Jew.⁷¹

Individual conscience may be a purely historical evolution of mankind, but the fact remains that the salvation of the Hindū people cannot come about through a purely individual

sima Collectio Conciliorum, vol. 1 (Leipzig, Paris, 1901–27), 1033–40; cf. G. Bardy, *Paul de Samosate* (Louvain, 1929), pp. 13–19, and see the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* of Vatican II.

⁶⁷ See, in addition to the other works mentioned: J. Pepin, *Mythe et Allégorie, les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris: Aubier, 1958); J. Cazeneuve, *Les rites et la condition humaine*, (Paris: P.D.F., 1958), with ample bibliography; A. W. Watts, *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953); L. Malevez, *Christian Message and Myth* (London: SCM Press, 1958).

⁶⁸ See J. J. Bachofen, *Der Mythos von Orient und Occident—Eine Metaphysik der alten Welt*, ed. M. Schroeter (Munich: Beck, 1956). See comments on this important work in G. Söhngen, "Tiefe und Wahrheit des Mythos," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 10(2) (1959): pp. 137–40. For the myth as a source of tradition even in a Christian sense, see the remarkable references in J. Pieper, "Über den Begriff der Tradition," in *Tradition im Industriezeitalter* (Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, n.d.), pp. 25–27. For bibliography and the problem itself, see R. Panikkar, *Le mystère du culte dans l'Hindouisme et le Christianisme*.

⁶⁹ Unfortunately, we cannot expound further on this important subject here if we are to avoid losing the thread of our subject.

⁷⁰ See the whole chapter "La liturgia e la legge della salvezza in comunità," in C. Vagaggini, *Il senso teologico della liturgia* (Rome: Paoline, 1957), pp. 211–30: "Le relazioni tra Dio e l'uomo sono tutte impostate sulla legge dell'oggettività" [Relations between God and Man are all based on the law of objectivity], p. 214.

⁷¹ This is why the approach "I do not preach the Gospel to Hindūs, I preach the Gospel to men" (C. F. Andrews) will not work if the "men" happen to be Hindūs. See B. de Kretser, "Christianity and the Renaissance of Non-Christian Religions," in *National Christian Council Review* 89(9) (September 1959): pp. 306–14.

action, which would have very little meaning—it must be something collective, sociological, and mythical. Once again, therefore, Hinduism shows that it has a place in the economy of salvation⁷² and cannot be equated with “sin,” “falsehood,” and the like.

My purpose is to emphasize that, according to Christian doctrine, the Father in heaven makes his sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust,⁷³ that Christ is the expectation of all peoples,⁷⁴ that his Spirit is also at work among those who do not know him,⁷⁵ that he is found by those who do not seek him,⁷⁶ and that he is a hidden God⁷⁷ who sometimes conceals himself either in an unknown God⁷⁸ or in the hearts of Men of good will.⁷⁹ Christians often need reminding that Christ himself taught Peter not to call profane or impure anything that God has made clean,⁸⁰ for he has other sheep that do not follow the visible flock⁸¹ and other disciples who work miracles and are not acknowledged by his visible followers.⁸²

It was Jesus himself who sent a non-Jewish woman not to sow but to reap where others (other non-Jews) had toiled, pointing out to his closest disciples the meaning of this action.⁸³ In ancient days God spoke to our fathers many times and in many ways;⁸⁴ now in recent times he has spoken to us through his own Son,⁸⁵ in whom all things are united,⁸⁶ for he is the atoning sacrifice not only for our sins but for the reconciliation of the whole world

⁷² The case of the people of Israel has received special treatment in the Christian economy. Yet it must be emphasized that God's election of the “chosen” people is a positive and particular act that does not mean at all a rebuke or rejection of other nations. For the problem of the Old Testament, which provides an *analogy* to our question, see A. Landgraf, “Die Gnadenökonomie des Alten Bundes nach der Lehre der Frühscholastik,” *Zeitschrift f. kath. Theologie* 57 (1933): pp. 215–53; G. Philips, “La grace des justes de l'Ancien Testament,” *Ephemerides theol. Lovanien* 23 (1947): pp. 521–56, and 24 (1948): pp. 23–58; A. F. Hofmann, “Die Gnade der Gerechten des Alten Bundes nach Thomas von Aquin,” *Divus Thomas* 29 (1951): pp. 167–87; W. Baumgarten, *Israelitische und altorientalische Weisheit* (Tübingen, 1933); K. Thieme, *Biblische Religion heute* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1960); H. U. von Balthasar, *Einsame Zwiesprache* (Cologne: J. Hegner, 1958); H. L. Goldschmidt, *Die Botschaft des Judentums* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1960); M. Vereno, “Israel und Kirche,” *Kairos* (1/1962): pp. 32–36, and the entire issue dedicated to Israel.

⁷³ Mt 5:45. Śaṅkarācārya uses the old image of Parjanya, the rain-giver, who with his rain helps the different growths of the most varying seeds (which should explain how men grow differently due to personal karma). *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* II.I.34.

⁷⁴ Gen 49:10.

⁷⁵ Rom 15:21, quoting Isa 52:15.

⁷⁶ Rom 10:20; cf. Isa 65:1.

⁷⁷ Isa 45:15.

⁷⁸ Acts 17:23.

⁷⁹ See Lk 2:14.

⁸⁰ Acts 10:15.

⁸¹ Jn 10:16.

⁸² Mk 9:37.

⁸³ Jn 4:38.

⁸⁴ Not just through the prophets of Israel, as the Old Testament itself corroborates. See Job 4:12; Jer 49:7; Baruch 3:22–23; Hab 1:5, etc. See also J. Danielou, *Les saints “païens” de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1956); S. Grill, “Die religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung der vormosaïschen Bündnisse,” *Kairos* (1/1960): 17–22.

⁸⁵ Heb 1:1.

⁸⁶ Eph 1:10.

according to the language of the age.⁸⁷

It is important to note that Christian theology can no longer ignore Hinduism—or any other religion—when, in its own doctrines, it seriously considers the exigencies of our times.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ 1 Jn 2:2.

⁸⁸ See J. Neuner, "Das Christus-Mysterium und die indische Lehre von den Avatāras," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, vol. 3, ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (Würzburg: Echter, 1954), pp. 785–824 ("so bringt die übernatürliche Bestimmung des Menschen den Mythos hervor," p. 822). Often, however, due to objective difficulties in understanding a complex religion like Hinduism and the lack of valid hermeneutics, many theological studies on world religions in general and Hinduism in particular are one-sided and unbalanced. See H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (London: Collins, 1977), pp. 98ff. The famous theologian strongly criticizes the theory of anonymous Christians proposed by his friend Karl Rahner. Küng's work is profound, and no one could accuse him of not taking Christianity seriously. However, the author does not go beyond the boundaries of the West, which has been Christian (not catholic, i.e., universal) for two thousand years. For this reason we should strive to interpret other religions from within and with faith, as D'Sa does in his book (2006), an example of healthy pluralism, and Christian. In my opinion, Küng confuses Christian *identity* with his doctrinal *identification*.

POWER AND ACTION

To avoid egalitarian syncretism and a bland denial of the validity of polar analogies, a second kind of analogy evolved. This second model characterized Hinduism and Christianity respectively as potential-actual, seed-fruit, forerunner-presence, allegory-thing in itself, desire-accomplishment, symbol-reality, or the specifically Christian dynamism of death-resurrection. This attitude was called "fulfillment theology."

In this view, Hinduism is the desire for fullness and that fullness is Christ; hence Hinduism already strives for the same mystery as Christianity—and already contains, therefore, the symbolism of the Christian reality. Hinduism holds first place by right of its age, while Christianity represents a culmination, not just because of its historical position, and not just as a continuation or merely natural prolongation of an earlier religion, but as the actual new and decisive step toward fullness. Since Hinduism is recognized in this model as belonging to the economy of salvation, this kind of analogy is fairer to it, although it is still somewhat condescending and does not satisfy either religion. These analogies suffer from shortcomings similar to those that afflict the static polar analogies.

The justification of the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism based on the similarities of these dynamic pairs is the belief that Christianity embodies the fullness of God's revelation and that no other religion has that fullness, which is the presence of the ultimate on earth, the immanence of the transcendent in Man. Thus, the followers of other religions strive to reach the infinite, whereas for Christians it is already present as Christ in Man. Yet the objections to this scheme outweigh the possible insights it might afford us.

1. An obvious objection to the desire-fulfillment analogy is that the evaluations of the two religions are interpretations that are both historically and theologically unfounded. It cannot be denied, of course, that Hinduism represents Man's longing to experience the theandric reality,¹ but to say that the fulfillment of that desire *is* Christianity would be to put a very special interpretation on the word "Christianity," in which case the analogy would not serve to show us the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism since Christianity would also be on the same plane. Eschatology is still to arrive. Christians and non-Christians are not far from the "kingdom of God."²

2. The second objection is theological: if Christianity alone offers Men on earth the fullness of the theandric reality and no other religion possesses that fullness, but only strives for it, then Hinduism is once again denied its proper theological place in the economy of salvation. If the purpose of religion is salvation, and salvation, in theistic language, is "union with

¹ The word "theandric" (both divine and human) in Christian patristics corresponds homeomorphically to the *puruṣa* concept of the Vedas (cf. *RV* X.90) and later, like the *nara-nārāyaṇa* motif, as a symbol of the fullness or divinization of Man.

² See Mk 12:34 and many other passages.

God (or, in more specifically Christian terms, incorporation into Christ)," then this theandric dimension is crucial to salvation. Now, in the eyes of both religions, since Hinduism does have a place in the economy of salvation according to Christian theology, there is no justification for the belief that Christianity alone fully possesses God's revelation and saving power.

3. A third objection to such dynamic analogies regards terminology. If a thing is merely potential, it needs an act that will make it real; it needs grace, in other words, yet this grace is not denied to anyone.³ If Hinduism were only potentially the fullness of religion, or only potentially offered to disclose the theandric mystery, it could never belong to the true economy of salvation.

If, on the other hand, Hinduism is accepted as belonging to the universal plan of salvation but only in its potential function, then the terms "potential" and "real" would be merely arbitrary labels not corresponding to reality, because of the fact that Hindūs, despite this, still continue to be saved. It goes without saying, moreover, that Christianity itself has not attained fullness either, since we are all pilgrims.

4. The psycho-pastoral objections to the potency-action model are the same as those directed to the positive-negative model: the idea cannot even present valid arguments. There are two possible reactions: either that the presumptuous claim of Christianity is not true because all religions are more or less equivalent, or, equally, that Hinduism is the end and fulfillment of Christianity.

All forms of "fulfillment" are, in fact, contained in Christianity or Hinduism only insofar as they are personally realized. The aforementioned dynamic analogies are valid within each person only—that is to say, vertically, in Man's movement toward God, not horizontally, in the relationship between two conceptual systems such as Hinduism and Christianity.

The only way for Hinduism and Christianity to attain salvation is in the life of people who have realized the fullness of Man.⁴

One could speak, then, of a mutual fecundation. It is natural for those who love more, who have experienced more, to have more to offer. This may result in a new creature. Christians should remember that the Spirit makes all things new,⁵ that in Christ we are a new creation,⁶ and that this does not happen once and for all because we die every day.⁷ Likewise, Hindūs should remember that only after many transformations can true fulfillment be attained.⁸

The death-resurrection analogy needs to be understood in its proper context. The real intention behind the analogy is not to say that Hinduism should become Christianity, but to point out that there is within Hinduism itself a dynamism that leads it toward that peculiar movement of death and resurrection that reveals the work of the *antaryāmin*, the inner guide, which Christians call Christ—in his "homeomorphic equivalent." The individual must die to himself, to his limiting beliefs concerning the nature of Man, and be "resurrected" and attain reality, fulfillment.

Again, let us remember that the meeting of religions is not a purely rational encounter. It is in the depths of the obscure knowledge of faith that the two spiritualities can meet, and it is there that real conversion can take place on both sides.

³ See the Christian axiom "*facienti quod est in se Deus non denegat gratiam*" [to the one who does what in him lies, God does not deny grace].

⁴ See R. Panikkar 1977/16.

⁵ See Rev 21:5.

⁶ See 2 Cor 5:17.

⁷ See Rom 8:36.

⁸ See BG II.22; II.72, etc.

The possibility of such a transformation taking place can be neither substantiated nor demonstrated. We can, however, attempt to convince existing religions not to remain closed and static but to be led by their own dynamism, so as to avoid the risk that a sterile attachment to their own present or past structures causes them to stagnate and dwindle away. We spoke earlier of "death and resurrection."

We must grow, or, we might say, we must avoid becoming stagnated. What is needed is something that can jolt each and every person into finding and living his deepest reality. The existential shock of the encounter might perhaps produce this effect. For this analogy to be valid, however, it must also be applied to Christianity itself, as a historic religion, without knowing what form it will take.

If the analogies we have spoken of here are inadequate, how are we to define the *and* of Hinduism and Christianity? It cannot be translated by an optimistic "toward" or by a pessimistic "versus." We must simply shift the alleged horizontal movement of the dynamic analogy and turn it into a vertical movement within each tradition. Differences are not by nature undesirable. It is the fear that in facing our differences we may become involved in a conflict that causes us to abandon the possibility of discovering unsuspected aspects of truth within the confrontation itself.

No single analogy is probably capable of adequately characterizing the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity in all its complexity. Perhaps each religion is a dimension of the other in a *sui generis* co-inherence or co-involvement, just as every human being is potentially the whole of Mankind, though each one develops and actualizes only a finite and limited number of possibilities.

Each religious orthodoxy can be considered a map of the religious territory (bearing in mind that the map is not the territory). Maps may vary in accuracy and can be drawn up in different scales and illustrate different aspects of the territory they are describing. Sometimes roads, mountains, and rivers may be enough to orient the traveller; at other times urban agglomerations may suffice. Topographic maps or maps of vegetation, microclimate, or soil type will orient initiates of different persuasions—each one complementary, each revealing a different aspect of reality. Yet a map is not the reality, just as an error on the geographer's map cannot literally change the microclimates on that of the meteorologist. Maps are made on the basis of set data; the reality of the encounter and the consequent change that takes place within it, on the other hand, are a contingent event that belongs to the dynamism of history. Our attempt to grasp the design of this contingency is merely a part of the actual dynamism of religious traditions.

. . .

There is a link between Hinduism "and" Christianity, and we have tried to describe it as clearly as possible. We might also say, however, that on a higher plane there is no link from below between these historical identities, but only from above, inasmuch as the true transcendent call manifests itself as a longing that is inherent to us all. The "and," therefore, is not only ambivalent but also transcendental, like the conjunction that unites the Father *and* the Son *and* the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.

In other words (though on this level we should put all words aside) the nature of our "and" is a mystery. We cannot decipher the secret of history. We have tried to describe a relationship, but at the ultimate level, so far as it is given to us to speculate on the freedom of men, we are obliged to recognize that this *and* should not be interpreted only in the sense of integration, assimilation, or conversion, but in a higher way that does not negate these ideas but gives all thoughts a humbler meaning and greater ambiguity. "Unfortunately," it

seems that the musical score of these relationships was lost in Paradise, and for the time being we must just be content with our separate melodies in the hope that one day we may hear the full symphony.

Hinduism and Christianity are two very ancient religions with a complex history that shuns all simplification. The problem is not so acute for Hinduism because, unlike Christianity, it is not a church (as in organization) and it is not obsessed with orthodoxy, though it does have a certain identity that cannot be reduced to a specific difference (identification), as we said earlier. Any attempt at comparison between the two religions is made from the particular point of view adopted, and this is based on our scale of values, which is not neutral.

The religions, in fact, are different. As has been stated repeatedly, "religious pluralism is not new,"⁹ either in Christianity or in Hinduism. We have spoken about two religions, and we have, in a certain way, said that they are inseparable. Every religion is a world in itself.

Today, however, a more or less general criticism is being aimed at all religion. From one point of view we cannot deny that religions, especially institutionalized religions, those that have gained a certain amount of power, have been a factor of violence and even war in the history of mankind.¹⁰ As we have said, religions incarnate both the best and the worst of human nature. Hinduism and Christianity are no exception. This is what has led me repeatedly to wish for the "conversion" of all religions in this century. Today we are conscious of this fact and take great hope from it, while being aware of the opposite reactions. Nevertheless, it would be one-sided and counterproductive to judge religions only on their negative aspects.

⁹ See J. Dupuis 1989, 1997.

¹⁰ See R. Panikkar 1995, and other more recent editions in other languages, 1999 and 2005.

Part Three
GOD AND THE WORLD ACCORDING TO THE
BRAHMA SŪTRA I.1.2

*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante,
yena jātāni jīvanti,
yat prayantyaḥhisaṃvṛṇanti,
tad vijijñāśasva*

*That from which truly all beings are born,
by which when born they live
and into which they all return:
that seek to understand.*

III.1¹

πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο

All things were made by him.

Jn 1:3²

•

¹ This text is the scriptural basis of *BS* I.1.2.

² *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*. See also 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16.



PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The existential character of the first chapter and the historic-sociological aspect of the second chapter should not overshadow the intellectual and doctrinal dimension of this third chapter. The study of the intellectual aspects of religion is certainly not enough to establish a fruitful dialogue, but it is an essential condition for a lasting and real encounter. In this sense, this third chapter completes, by means of one single example, what has been suggested in the previous two. Naturally, we do not depend on just one single text to confirm our view, but the following paragraphs study in detail one concrete instance that serves to illustrate the dialectics of the relationship.

Yet this concrete example has a special value. We could have chosen other texts that refer more to experience, as is the case in many expressions in the Upanishads. This might have been more interesting, but also less relevant to our study. As mystical texts the Upanishads can speak to anybody capable of attaining the level of a certain spiritual experience. But we are not dealing with the mystical core of two religions. Here, however, we are concerned with the whole complex of two living religious traditions. Our text is taken from an Indic scholasticism that has already arrived at its point of crystallization. It purports to reveal the discovery of a real experience, but it claims also to express a theoretical truth capable of sustaining a doctrinal system and "theological" speculation. Again, the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity cannot be reduced to a desire for mutual liking and tolerance. It must also cater to the exigencies of theoretical speculation. The example we have chosen does not claim to sustain the burden of an entire theory, but it may have value as a paradigm.

A Philosophical Dialogue

There are three things I do not intend to do: I do not propose to write a complete *bhāṣya*, a commentary on a *sūtra* of the *Brahma-Sūtras* following the traditional canons of Indian philosophy. Though the temptation has been great and the effort would prove worthwhile, I have no intention of adding a new commentary to the existing line of rich and famous commentaries on this central point of Vedānta. To do such a thing in a sensible way I should be obliged to expose, comment on, and criticize all of the Indian philosophical tradition that has a bearing on the subject.

The second thing I do not intend to do is write an apologetic essay. Apologetics are useful in the right time and place. They must, however, be justified not only subjectively by the good intention of the writer, but also objectively by the nature of the subject matter. If this were an apologetic study I would have to take into consideration a whole series of problems that I have purposely left aside. I will not, therefore, enter into the Christian tradition to show how Indic thematics are adapted or can be adapted to it, or how and to what extent

Indic concepts and answers are compatible or incompatible with it. Apologetics can take a defensive stance in trying to prove that Christian answers make sense and are able to refute the accusations made against Christianity, or they can take the offensive and try to steer the questions and answers of other religious traditions into the Christian context. Both attitudes are alien to the spirit of this book.

Third, this essay is not merely a comparative study. I do not intend to compare one philosophy with another, or to check the answer given by one tradition against the corresponding answer of another, much less compare God the Father with Brahman, or Īśvara with Christ.

There exists a contemporary philosophical and theological problem, and in analyzing this problem I would like to express my own point of view. I cannot, however, expound on the subject without using words and concepts that are laden with the meanings and associations given them by the history of human thought. To express my thoughts, therefore, I am obliged to use the most suitable existing formulations. In studying these various formulations, I have been guided by the philosophical traditions of India that have already studied deeply these age-old questions.

I would like to make a philosophical study on a subject that belongs neither solely to the East nor solely to the West. This subject is the philosophical problem of God and the World—a problem that arises in the mind and is close to my heart. Before making any observation of my own, I feel obliged to meditate on what the thinkers of this world *thought* or *meant* when they *spoke* or *wrote* on the subject. This will give us a range of different perspectives and solutions.¹ My purpose is not to attempt to harmonize these or find a higher synthesis, but to clarify the misunderstandings and fundamental differences between the various visions of reality. I believe that not all oppositions are always irreducible. Keeping in mind the basic problem without weighing it down with useless implications, I should like to suggest a possible transposition. Though it is a very delicate operation, this transposition of truth (i.e., the introducing of this truth into a wider context or a different framework) may prove to be not only fruitful for the transposed truth but also useful to the “host” philosophy. A living seed may germinate in a neighbor’s field also.

Despite considerable effort, the encounter between East and West—or, more precisely, between Hinduism and Christianity or between Indic philosophy and Western philosophy—has amounted in past centuries to hardly more than one-sided communication and, not infrequently, mutual misunderstanding, except for a few important exceptions. There is no denying that the two traditions have not succeeded in reaching a more universal symbiosis—which cannot be considered impossible a priori. Certainly, the West has begun to make efforts to discover and rehabilitate the Indic culture, but its *approaches* have been characterized by either pro- or anti-Western prejudices, which have made real dialogue and mutual fructification² very difficult. So far, this encounter has not gone much further than a more or less adequate mutual knowledge, and although this has led to a degree of reciprocal inspiration or stimulation, misrecognition still remains. Orientalism is still a specialization, and the renaissance that Schopenhauer was expecting from Western contact with India has been imperceptible, though we may now be approaching a new era (while bearing in mind that “Orientalism” is, after all, a Western construction).³ The purpose of this study is not to offer a solution to such a complex problem, but to contribute toward mutual understanding

¹ To avoid making this essay excessively weighty, we have concentrated on Indic philosophy alone.

² See M. Eliade, “Crisis and Renewal in History of Religions,” *History of Religions* 1 (1965): 2.

³ See E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

and fecundation,⁴ to be a commentary on a theologico-philosophical problem based on a text that is rooted in one philosophical tradition and relevant also to the other tradition. Its aim is simply to open the way to sincere dialogue that underlies or transcends the reality to which both traditions refer.⁵ Whatever other opinions we may hold, and whatever other convincing answers we may find, dialogue demands *common* ground first of all, even if we have to transform it later in our pursuit of truth. It may be, for example, that comparison between Īśvara and Christ is not only dangerous but completely inappropriate. There are, however, two different levels on which dialogue can be both feasible and fruitful: the intentional level and the analogical level.

The *intentional level* is the underlying *existing* reality that the word seeks to convey—the reality that is revealed in the intention of the word itself. When two persons of different religions decide to pray together despite their diverging ideas, there is “something” to which these two existential attitudes refer. This “something,” if we accept it, must ultimately be *intentionally* the same.

The *analogical level* refers to the sphere of the *essential*. Christians, for example, call Christ “the Lord” just as Hindūs call Īśvara “the Lord.” The meaning they give to “Lord,” however great their difference may be, cannot be so absolute as to transcend all analogy. The word “Lord” is an analogue and has many, and quite similar, meanings. There is a *primum analogatum*, a first principle that enables us not only to call the “Lord” by different names but also to refer to him by two different concepts.⁶

On both the intentional and the analogical levels we discover a common ground on which dialogue can take place. To deny the possibility of this common ground *a priori* means not only condemning oneself to isolation but also running the risk of fanaticism. On the other hand, recognition of this common ground represents the phenomenological foundation for true dialogue rather than a confrontation between two monologues. The foundation may be a transcendent existence or immanent analogy, but it does not allow us to ignore all the differences that arise from our respective cultural worlds and our different ways of living. Reality is the (ontological) point of attraction of all philosophizing, but it is not necessarily the psychological starting point. The Indic mentality, with few exceptions, has tended to adopt a theological attitude, as did also most of the early Christian philosophers.⁷ This tendency, however, was counterbalanced by the efforts of medieval Muslim and Christian Scholastics, to such a degree that after the seventeenth century Western thought was characterized by the opposite tendency, that which places God epistemologically at the end.⁸ Yet neither attitude—that which explains the World by starting from the conception of God, or that which arrives at a certain concept of God by starting from knowledge of the World—can be made absolute. They are, in fact, complementary.

⁴ In the past few decades the subject has become almost popular and a great many writings have appeared, as well as centers for religious studies in many universities. There has also been a proliferation of comparative religion studies.

⁵ “Cuiuslibet rei tam materialis quam immaterialis est ad rem aliam ordinem habere” [It is characteristic of any being, whether material or immaterial, to have some reference to something else], says Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* XXIII.1.

⁶ On this subject I introduced the concept of “homeomorphic equivalence,” as I have previously explained.

⁷ See R. Panikkar, *Maya e Apocalisse*, pp. 83–86.

⁸ The so-called evidence of the existence of God would support what we are saying. In this case, reason claims to justify faith or, at least, not make it irrational.

I do not intend to tackle the entire problem of the relationship between God and the World, but only to offer an example that might help to clarify the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. I shall try to do justice to the opposing tendencies from a philosophical standpoint—a procedure that may help us to overcome the historical and cultural East-West dichotomy. In approaching the problem, therefore, we shall keep both traditions in mind and try to clear a common path, or possibly even a wide road, that can take us a fair distance before we reach a crossroads.

The God of Our Study⁹

In this study we shall speak about God, the Absolute, Brahman, the Trinity. In the following pages we shall keep to the idea that is common to the two traditions, Indic and theist (though I do believe the Trinity can be considered as part of monotheism). In order to make our terms clear from the start, we would like to outline briefly some dialectical implications of the fact that this God has some degree of reality—that is, that He exists even if only as thought.

This is not to say that these implications will necessarily be recognized by all schools of thought, but most of them when speaking about God refer to that "thing" that we shall try to describe, both as an extra-mental form and as an exclusively mental existence (even if only to negate it). God is a historical reality in human culture. The observations that follow should not be understood as defending a particular theological or metaphysical doctrine even though, since they speak a concrete language, they are not without unavoidable connotations. The central point of what I am affirming rests on the conviction that any discourse on God refers to a sui generis "thing" that does not fit in any other category. We can only make a phenomenology of God because, by definition, God is only a phenomenon that appears to our spirit, whatever his reality may be. Perhaps the only description common to both traditions is that God is the Symbol of the Ineffable that expresses for us this (imperfect) intentionality.

Both Hinduism and Christian monotheism believe that if there is a God, then the rest of reality, down to the tiniest and most hidden entity and every sort of human activity, cannot be independent from or indifferent to this fact. Acknowledging the "existence" of God is not, in itself, a neutral declaration, but a declaration that involves everything. We shall attempt, therefore, to expound not on the consequences deriving from this hypothesis but on some of the implications that necessarily precede it.

If there is a God, this implies ipso facto certain *epistemological* presuppositions, that is, that the word has a meaning. *Whether God exists* does not depend on my affirmation or negation of the fact; it is independent of my opinion because the thought of God is alive in history. I may prove the existence of God or I may deny the possibility of any proof, or even reject his Being, but this has no bearing on the fact that God exists or does not exist. Moreover, neither my negation nor my affirmation of God has any *existential* influence on the Godhead. If God exists, this fact is independent of my knowledge of Him. This statement, incidentally, is valid even if we consider, as is feasible, that our conception of God is also a creation of our mind.

If there is a God, the idea (even mental) that God cannot be comprehended by any human intellect, but must transcend all human capacities since, if He exists, He is far greater than Man. He can be transparent and fully knowable only to Himself. To us He is Mystery,

⁹ A first version of this short reflection was published in *The Vedānta Kesari* (December 1956), with the title "If God Exists."

in the fullest sense of the word. A purely *comprehensible* God would not be God at all, for I would then be his foundation rather than he being the very source of my *comprehension*. No human formula, therefore, can adequately express God.

If God exists, however, though he transcends human reason and his essence is incomprehensible, Man must still be able to develop a conscious approach to God, an approach that is not the result of a profound and arduous intellectual process, such as is possible to only a few extremely learned people, but must be *given* to the human being through the natural process of maturity. In other words, if God exists there must be a normal and simple way to discover his presence. If God exists he exists for us, and this is why we are able to speak of him (even only as a symbol).

If God exists, his existence must have not only epistemological precedence but also *ontological* priority: God is the Foundation and the Beginning of all. Man and the World depend on God, and even if we admit that the reverse is also true, the former relationship takes special priority. We can become aware of the existence of God through our fellow men and through the world around us, and we may thus obtain some analogical knowledge of him. By definition, both Man and the World are founded on God and are constitutively connected to him. Man can ascend epistemologically to God only because God first descended ontologically to us.

If there is a God, his being the Foundation and the Beginning is not to be understood only as origin or commencement, but also as end and achievement. By definition (and also hypothesis), God is the foundation of everything. God is not only at the ontic beginning of the universe but also at its end and consummation. God is not only the inspiring and originating force and source of all but also the term of attraction and conclusion of every being and every activity. God is the fullness toward which each particle of being aspires and every movement tends. God is the ultimate goal of the Cosmos, and the destination of history cannot be indifferent to him.

If there is a God, there is nothing above, outside, or even below him. Nothing independent of God. Nothing exists without being an existence, a consequence, an effect of God. Nothing is disconnected from Him. All that is, exists in God, from God, and for God. All beings not only proceed from God and go toward God but also *are* in God.

If God exists, this fact also implies certain specific *anthropological* connotations: God cannot be simply an "it" but must appear to me as a Person (not necessarily anthropomorphic, but we have no other language). An "it" is not conscious and is not perfect. God, moreover, cannot be a He or a She; God must be an "I." Furthermore, God is not *one* I among others, but *the* I. God is the One-who-is, the I-who-is, the I-am-who-I-am, the *aham*. We are God's *thou*. God is the I, and we are the *thou*. God has absolute priority. We may speak of God as "He," but if there is a God it is *God* who speaks first, who names *us*—and this is how we come into existence. God is the "I" who speaks and each of us is a "thou" named by God, and *we are* to the extent that God—the "I"—pronounces our being as his "thou." We are God's—and in this lies our dignity and, at the same time, our limitation. *We are* the "thou" of God, and only to this extent do we have our *being*. Every one of us is the "thou art" uttered by the "I am"—without revealing his Mystery.

If there is a God, his relationship with me cannot be abstract, but must be real, concrete, constitutive, and existential. In other words, my relationship with God is not numerical, quantitative, as if to him I were a "case" or a "number." It must be a personal, intimate, and special relationship, since I have God as *my* source, *my* being, *my* creator, *my* sustainer, *my* utmost self, *my* father. My approach to God cannot, therefore, be simply "generic" or purely intellectual, but it must be integral, total, involving body and soul, intellect and will, as well as knowledge, service, and love—and all this in a personal, unique form.

If there is a God, human society as well as human culture is not and cannot be a-religious, that is, unbound (the word "religion" being derived from the Latin *religare*, to bind or unite), independent and unconnected to God, as if God did not exist. This does not mean the restriction or diminution of the rightful autonomy (or better, ontonomy) of individuals and society, but rather the proper amplification of religion. If God exists, Man has duties before rights. His rights are a consequence of his duty as a human being, a person, a reflection of the Godhead with an unalienable ontic mission.

Briefly, "if God exists," this hypothesis cannot be irrelevant or unnecessary to the progress of the cosmos, but is, in fact, the hypothesis or foundation of the whole universe and of all our being and acting. If "God does not exist," perhaps he does not exist in reality but he does in the thought (and also the faith) of a large part of Mankind, in which case our argument remains valid. For the majority of people God has been and continues to be the ultimate landmark and hypothesis, which perhaps has no metaphysical value but it has served as an ultimate foundation (even if this foundation were *proved* to be inexistent), while the "God" hypothesis is, by definition, beyond all proof. We find ourselves, therefore, faced not with a vicious circle that implies human reason as the ultimate criterion of truth, but a *virtuous cycle* that allows us to trust our reason at the expense of this postulate. Many theologies attempt to break the impasse by sustaining that faith in God is granted by grace—which in no way detracts the "cult" of *logos* from the Divine Mystery.¹⁰ This is another subject, however.

We cannot deny, nevertheless, that the modern mentality, both Christian and Hindū, is critical of this traditional conception of the Godhead. Contemporary atheism is often reduced to antitheism among Christians and Hindūs alike. In fact, atheism, which has recently been posing a serious problem to culture, has now taken second place as a theoretical problem.¹¹ Traditions must be treated with respect and with their respective presuppositions.¹²

We have attempted to present concisely the traditional conception of Brahman and God (since the Trinity fell into oblivion). This is an ancient problem. Buddha himself reacted strongly to the inflation of his own times.¹³ It is no wonder that the modern mentality reacts also against this vision of God, both radically (atheism) and more critically (referring to the Trinity).¹⁴

It is all related (*sarvam sarvatmakam*). Since we insist on including divine infinitude as one of the canons of our human condition we cannot rationally harmonize an infinite God with human freedom, as Lucretius (99–55 BC) saw—but this problem lies outside our subject.

¹⁰ "Rationabile obsequium," the Vulgate translates τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν (Rom 12:1), which has been of such great importance in later theology. It was subsequently translated very differently (cult of truth, spirituality, etc.)

¹¹ See *L'ateismo contemporaneo*, four large volumes curated by the Philosophical Faculty of the Salesian Pontificia Università in Rome (director, Giulio Girardi) (Rome: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1967).

¹² We insist on this point because both traditions are still theistic in their own ways, though both Christianity and Hinduism have recently been manifesting doubts about this.

¹³ Cf., among others, R. Panikkar, 2006/XIX.

¹⁴ See R. Panikkar, 1998/XXIII.

THE TEXT

Background

As a starting point (*prasthāna*) for our reflection, we have chosen an aphorism of the *Brahma-Sūtras*. Before we begin to analyze it, it may be useful to briefly outline the historical background of this text.

The *Brahma-Sūtras* of Badarayana¹ (probably fourth century AD) are one of the three basic texts (known as *prasthāna-traya*) of the Vedānta school. The other two are the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, both sacred texts, the Upanishads being the formal part of the *śruti* and the *Gītā* also considered as a "revealed" text. Like the *Sūtra* texts of other philosophical schools (e.g., *mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, *yoga-Sūtra*, etc.), they form a concise summary of the teachings of the Vedānta (hence the name *Vedānta-Sūtra*). Every Vedāntin philosopher was expected to write a commentary (*bhāṣya*) on each of these three texts. The most prominent commentators are Śaṅkara² (circa AD 700), who expounds an Advaitic (or, according to some, monistic) interpretation, and Ramanuja³ (circa AD 1100), whose school has been defined as "qualified nondualism" or *viśiṣṭādvaita*. The main exponent of a dualistic interpretation (*dvaita*) was Madhva⁴ (thirteenth century). In addition to these famous commentators, the *Brahma-Sūtras* have also been commented upon by Bhaskara, Vācaspati Miśra, Ānandagiri, Govindānanda, Padmapada, Vallabha, Śrīkaṇṭha, Nimbarka, Vijñānabhikṣu, et al.⁵

Although the terse style of the *sūtras* often makes it difficult to grasp the exact meaning that their author intended to convey, today it is generally held that Śaṅkara's most famous interpretation does not in fact reflect the opinion of the *Sūtrakara* and that Badarayana must have been closer to a philosophy of "difference and nondifference" (*bhedabheda*).⁶

¹ See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*; B. N. K. Sharma, *The Brahmasūtras and Their Principal Commentaries*, vols. 1 and 2 (1971–1974), with their enlightening introductions.

² See the works of Śaṅkarācārya, vol. 3: *Brahmasūtra with Śaṅkarabhāṣya: The Vedānta-Sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya*, trans. G. Thibaut, parts 1 and 2; Paul Deussen, *Das System des Vedānta nach den Brahma-Sūtras des Bādarāyaṇa und dem Kommentare des Śaṅkara über dieselben*.

³ Rāmānuja, *Sribhāṣyam; The Vedānta-Sūtras with Rāmānuja's Sribhāṣya*, trans. G. Thibaut.

⁴ Madhva, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*; cf. S. Siauue, *La voie de la connaissance de Dieu (Brahmajijñāsa) selon l'Anuvyākhyāna de Madhva*; Siauue, *La doctrine de Madhva*.

⁵ See *The Brahmasūtra-Shāṅkara-bhāṣyam*, with the commentaries Bhāṣya-Ratnaprabhā, J. Bhāmati and Nyāyanirmaya of Śhrigovindānanda, Vācaspati and Ānandagiri.

⁶ See Klaus Rüping, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Vedānta-Philosophie*, part 1 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1977), p. 1.

Analysis

In the laconic second aphorism of this famous compendium of Indic wisdom it says "Whence the origin et cetera of this" (*Janmādyasya yataḥ* or, splitting the words, *janmādi asya yataḥ*, which translates as "The origin, etc., of this, whence respectively"). The meaning of the text seems obvious: "Brahman is that from which the origin, etc., of this world proceeds."⁷ A further grammatical analysis of the Sanskrit text only serves to strengthen this interpretation.⁸ Tradition agrees in saying that the "et cetera" of the *Sūtra* refers to a number of texts that begin with "origin" and add preservation, dissolution, and sometimes also growth, decrease, transformation, and such.⁹ This would give us the full literal meaning of our *Sūtra*: "Brahman is that from which the origin, preservation, and transformation of this world proceed." Or, more concisely, "Brahman is the only and ultimate cause of the world."¹⁰

Up to this point all of the numerous commentators on the *Sūtra* of Badarayana agree.

The formal structure of the aphorism is universally accepted to be: "Brahman is that from which all things proceed, to which they will return, and for which they exist." The discrepancies arise when the material content of the aphorism is analyzed, for it is not altogether obvious what the meaning of the words is, nor what this meaning implies and still less what lies behind it.

Clearly we are faced here with a description of Brahman, and at this point the discussion becomes more complex. Is this an "essential" definition¹¹ of Brahman like that given in the *śruti*, such as, for example, Being, Knowledge, and Beatitude, or Truth, Consciousness, and Infinitude?¹² Or is it an "accidental" definition¹³ in which Brahman is made known by means of a characteristic attribute that reveals to us the thing defined? One branch of the school of Śāṅkara, Vācaspati Miśra, would say that it is of course only an extrinsic definition. Madhva, on the other hand, would say that it is an essential definition, and his school would point out that to characterize Brahman as *ānanda* (beatitude) or as *karaṇa*

⁷ All commentators agree that *janmādi* = *utpattiyādi*; *yataḥ* = *yaddhetukam*; *tad* = *brahma*; and *asya* = *jagat* (i.e., production, etc., for *janmādi*; he who acts as cause, that is, Brahman, for *yataḥ*; and World for *asya*).

⁸ *Janmādi* is a *bahuvrīhi* compound of the type *tadguṇasamvijnāna*, which means *janma utpattih ādi asya tat*, i.e., he who has *janma* (origin) as his beginning. The root *jan-* means to generate, to beget, to produce, to create, to cause, to be born, and relates to the Greek γένεσις and the Latin (*g*)*nasco*. It could also be related to *natura*. See R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1972), pp. 55ff. *Asya* is the genitive of the demonstrative pronoun "this" in its neutral or masculine form: "of this"; *yataḥ* is a conjunctive particle meaning "whence," but also "since," "assuming that," "given that," etc.

⁹ See the several editions and commentaries for further scholarly details about this question. In order to give an idea of the concept used, we may remember that Yāska (cf. the Bhāmati in h.l.) speaks of six modifications, namely *jāyate* (being produced), *asti* (continuous existence), *vardhate* (grows), *vipariṇamate* (changes, transforms), *apakṣiyate* (decays), and *naśyati* (is destroyed) in *Nirukta* 1.2. For Yāska, see Siddheshwar Varma (with assistance of Bhimadev), *The Etymologies of Yāska* (Hoshiarpur: V.V.R.I., 1953).

¹⁰ Madhva, commenting on the text, introduces eight variations of which Brahman is the cause: *sr̥ṣṭi* (production), *sthitī* (existence), *samhāna* (destruction), *niyama* (control, discipline), *jñāna* (knowledge), *ajñāna* (ignorance), *bandha* (bond, attachment), and *mokṣa* (salvation, liberation).

¹¹ *Svarūpalakṣaṇa*, where the proper "form" of the thing is given.

¹² See e.g. *TU* II.1.

¹³ *Tatasthalakṣaṇa*, which has the meaning of the shore or bank beside which the thing flows, i.e., a property—distinct of its nature—by which the thing is known.

(cause) amounts to the same thing. Both theories are appropriate and inadequate at the same time: the debate continues.¹⁴

Importance of the Text

The importance of this text in Indic philosophy is well known. In a certain sense the entire history of Indic philosophy could be written on the basis of the *Brahma-Sūtra-bhāṣyas*. If the *Brahma-Sūtras* can be said to represent the quintessence of the Vedānta, this second *Sūtra* (the first is purely introductory) is a cornerstone on which rests a great part of Indic philosophical speculation.¹⁵

The central position of this *Sūtra* on Brahman, however, should not lead to the conclusion that the problem of Brahman is the starting point of Indic speculation. It seems to be true that the main concern, at least of Vedantic philosophy, is not Brahman, but *ātman*. In other words, priority is given not to the problem of Brahman but to preoccupation with the Self (*ātman*). It is the process of reflection on the Self that leads a good part of Indic philosophy to discover the problem of Brahman,¹⁶ and once this issue is raised it is impossible either to avoid it or to ignore its prime importance.

Although nowadays there is a tendency to emphasize experiential questions and practical issues, we cannot neglect the importance of purely theoretical problems when these are not disconnected from life. The fact is that the importance of our *Sūtra* belongs not only to the past but also to the present¹⁷—and here we have an example of a problem common to most philosophical schools. The text, moreover, is important from a philosophical point of view because it deals with three major metaphysical problems: the Absolute, the World, and their relationship. Its simplicity (though in the interpretation of the text are implicit risks of inaccuracy and syncretism) brings us into much closer contact with the problem itself than would a text that is entangled in complicated speculations or dependent on a fully developed philosophical system.

We have here an aphorism summarizing Upanishadic cosmology, which presents the starting point for theological speculation and offers a basis on which many philosophical traditions can engage in fruitful discussion. Our purpose is not to analyze all the implications of the text or follow their evolution throughout the history of Indic philosophy, but only to point out certain considerations that may prove of interest to a dialogue between East and West, without referring to any specific philosophical system. This text offers us valuable complementary insight into a "Western" problem, namely the cosmological argument for the

¹⁴ See, for instance, R. P. Singh, *The Vedānta of Śaṅkara* (Oaipur, 1949), p. 293, where he says that "the entire misunderstanding about the problem of creation in the Vedānta of Śaṅkara has its genesis in the thought that the Saguna Brahman is an ontological principle, and the second sūtra undertakes to define the nature of this Saguna Brahman."

¹⁵ We include a few details of Indic speculation as an example of the spirit of its philosophy, which is not only the mystic flight but also "die Anstrengung des Begriffes" [the strenuous effort of the concept], to quote Hegel.

¹⁶ See B. Heimann, *Studien zur Eigenart des indischen Denkens*, in which the concept of *ātman* is thoroughly studied.

¹⁷ See the enlightening article by T. R. V. Murti, "The Two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita, *Tatastha*-, and *Svarūpa*-Lakṣaṇa," in K. C. Bhattacharya Memorial Volume (Amalner: Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1958). See also M. Hiriyanna, "Definition of Brahman," *Indian Philosophical Studies* 1 (Mysore, 1957), pp. 98–103.

existence of God. Lastly, it will provide an introduction to one aspect of the Christian theme of the Trinity, since this *Sūtra* and the doctrine of the Trinity touch on a common problem that might lead to fruitful dialogue, which has so far been nonexistent. As Śaṅkara himself says, "When we compare two things, we do so only on the basis of the specific aspects they have in common."¹⁸ If we do not seek out this common ground, all dialogue will be sterile, because no dialogue is possible without a certain communion of minds, of ideas, of aims, or at least of desires.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* III.2.20; cf. also II.3.40.

¹⁹ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III.6 (10006 to 10015).

ŚAṆKARA'S INTERPRETATION

To begin with, I would like to refer to the commentary of the most well-known philosopher of Advaita-Vedānta, because no *Sūtra* should be read without a *bhāṣya*, and because no text can be fully understood without knowledge of the traditional interpretation. Śaṅkara's commentary, moreover, is classic and authoritative. I have chosen Śaṅkara because the *prima facie* meaning of the *Sūtra* seems to be at variance with the more renowned Vedantic system, of which he is the most famous exponent. The text, in fact, seems to suggest that God is the cause of this world, and that the first step toward knowledge of Brahman is precisely to recognize it as the originator of the world.

However, the text is more subtle than this. It does not say directly that Brahman is the origin, etc., of the world, but that it is "that from which" the origin, etc., of this world proceeds. In other words, this world has an "origin, etc." and "that from which" this "origin, etc." proceeds is Brahman. Now let us return to our text, following Śaṅkara's commentary¹ and taking into consideration those of Vācaspati Miśra² and Padmapada also.³

To Śaṅkara, *janmadi* stands for origin, preservation, and dissolution,⁴ because all other transformations or changes can be reduced to these three. *Yataḥ* denotes Brahman as cause,⁵ both omniscient and omnipotent,⁶ from which come origin, preservation, and destruction, or rather, production, existence, and dissolution.

Only in the Lord (Īśvara) can the World find its origin, for neither atoms, nor nonintelligent being, nor nonexistence, nor changing being can be the cause of this world. Moreover, the source cannot lie in the nature of the world as such, since we recognize that the world only presents us with specific places, times, and causes, while we strive to see the World as a whole and find a foundation for this whole. If the source were in the nature of the World it would be possible by mere inference to attain knowledge of Brahman, or we would immediately recognize this World as the effect of Brahman. The theologian Śaṅkara, supported by Ramanuja and almost all exponents of Indic philosophy, explicitly negates this on the grounds that, on the one hand, it would endanger the transcendent and supernatural nature of Brahman (which cannot be attained by any human means), and on the other hand, it would

¹ See *Brahma-sūtra-catuhśūtri*, ed. Pandit Har Dutt Sharma, Poona Oriental Series 70 (Poona, Oriental Book Agency, 1940).

² *The Bhāmati of Vācaspati on Śaṅkara's Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, Catuhśūtri*, ed. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri and C. Kunhan Raja (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Society Publishing House, 1933).

³ See *The Pañcapādikā of Padmapada*, Eng. trans. D. Venkataramiah, Gaekwad's Oriental Series 107 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1948).

⁴ *Janmasthitirbhanga* in h.l.

⁵ *Yata iti kāraṇanirdeśaḥ*, ibid.

⁶ *Sarvajñātsarvasaktiḥ*, ibid.

render superfluous the *śruti* (Scripture, revelation), whose purpose is precisely to lead us to the knowledge and realization of Brahman.

"Knowledge of the real nature of a thing does not depend on the human intellect⁷—it depends on the thing itself."⁸ Brahman, however, is a kind of "Being" that transcends all our sensible knowledge, and therefore the meaning of this text is that Scripture alone can reveal Brahman to our intellect with certainty. Śaṅkara quotes the famous text in which Varuṇa answers his son Bṛhgu: "That from whence these beings originate, that by which, when born, they live, that into which they enter at their death, try to know that. That is Brahman."⁹ And he ends his commentary by quoting what he calls the definitive (Upanishadic) text: "From bliss [*ānanda*] alone these beings are born; by bliss, when born, they live; into bliss they enter at their death."¹⁰ Brahman is essentially the omniscient cause, eternally pure, intelligent, and free.¹¹

It is well known that in order to defend the absoluteness of Brahman, Śaṅkara's followers were compelled to say that, properly speaking, not Brahman but Īśvara is the cause of this World, because Brahman is completely beyond any kind of relationship with this World. Śaṅkara himself, however, in his *bhāṣya*, makes no clear-cut distinction between Brahman and Īśvara; in fact, he identifies the latter with the former.¹² Though in one passage he mentions the word Īśvara, he is actually constantly speaking of Brahman, as do the Sūtras also.

There is no doubt that Śaṅkara refers to Brahman as that from which the origin, preservation, and end of this World proceed, and that he emphasizes the necessity of the Scriptures for a (conceptual) knowledge of Brahman. Thus, any kind of cosmological argument for proving the existence of Brahman would seem to be ruled out. Nevertheless, a closer examination of Śaṅkara's point of view shows that he does not discard sensible knowledge (and what derives from it) itself, but rejects it as a means of reaching Brahman. "Brahman is not an object of the senses,"¹³ and "by nature the senses have objects as their content and not Brahman."¹⁴ He also states, however, that "knowledge of Brahman culminates in experience and has an existing object as its content."¹⁵ Along with Scripture, this "intuition of Brahman,"¹⁶ which his school calls the Advaitic experience,¹⁷ is the true means of attaining knowledge (*pramāṇa*) of Brahman. Even reasoning reason, inference (*anumāna*), has its place as a "means of confirming" the given/revealed truth of the Vedānta.¹⁸ Śaṅkara's commentary might be summarized as follows:

⁷ *Na vastuyāthātmyajñānam puruṣabuddhyāpekṣāḥ*, *ibid.*

⁸ *Vastutantram eva tat*, *ibid.*

⁹ *TU* III.1.

¹⁰ *TU* III.6.

¹¹ *Nitya-suddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva-sarvajña-svarūpa-kāraṇaḥ*, *ibid.*

¹² See Paul Hacker, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Īśvara," in *Kleine Schriften*, pp. 99ff.

¹³ *Indriyāviśayaḥ*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Anubhavāvasānatvāddhatavastuviśayaatvācca*, *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Brahmasākṣātkāraḥ, Bhāmatī*.

¹⁷ *Advaitānubhava*.

¹⁸ His Advaita chapter on the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* is dedicated to this problem. It asks whether nondualism (Advaita) can be established only by scriptural evidence or whether it can also be proved by reasoning, and replies that it is possible to establish nondualism also by reasoning. Śaṅkara, *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣadbhāṣya* III.1. See T. Vetter, "Die Gauḍapādīya-Kārikās: Zur Entstehung und zur Bedeutung von (A)Dvaita," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 22 (1978): pp. 95–131.

1. Brahman is the cause, that is, the cause of the origin, preservation, and dissolution of the World;
2. this cause cannot be inferred by any type of valid knowledge, since
3. this cause is not the object of sensible knowledge, but
4. it is the object of the Vedānta texts, and
5. it is discovered through a special experience: the Advaitic intuition.

The whole global meaning of Śaṅkara's doctrine cannot be deduced from a single commentary, but we may assume that he has stated his fundamental ideas on the subject, and that his formulations do not contradict the rest of his convictions.¹⁹ His views appear to be fundamental, but are perhaps not explicit enough about the nature of the cause, how it functions, and the nature of the effects.

We should not be too hasty, however, in drawing conclusions about Śaṅkara's point of view. First of all, we are not dealing specifically with him, so our exposition is only partial; second, though he explicitly accepts Brahman as cause of the World,²⁰ he does not actually say that the existence of the World is the effect of Brahman. Being cannot be caused, because there is no transit from being to nonbeing and vice versa.²¹ Being is Brahman and only Brahman (Brahman is Being itself). The effect is none other than a specific determination of the cause itself.²² We will not embark here on a detailed discussion of Śaṅkara's interpretation. Briefly, he makes the distinction between an ultimate and ontological level (*paramarthika*) and an empirical and epistemological level (*vyavaharika*). Accordingly, there are two forms of Brahman:²³ one without attributes and absolutely unrelated, and the other with attributes. It is the latter that constitutes the "cause" of the World. In conformity with the Scriptures,²⁴ however, he strongly emphasizes the unity of this twofold Brahman. I offer my interpretation of this point in the last section of my study.

¹⁹ For conscience sake, we cite the important passage *BSBh* II.1.14, which is essential for understanding his Advaitic doctrine.

²⁰ See *BSBh* II.1.34, which answers that God cannot be the cause of the World because of its injustice and suffering.

²¹ See *BG* II.16, with the valid and profound commentary by Zaehner (see R. C. Zaehner 1969), and Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya*.

²² See *BSBh* II.2.17. Students of Indic philosophy will recognize here the *satkārya-vāda* (theory of the effect preexisting in the cause).

²³ See *BD* II.3.1; *MaitU* VI.3.

²⁴ See *Brahma-Sūtra* III.3.39, which reconciles texts such as *BD* IV.2.22 (where the *ātman* is said to be actually without attributes) with passages such as *CD* VIII.1.1 (where Brahman assumes every type of determination).

THE *SŪTRA* IN ITS CONTEXT

Leaving Śaṅkara aside for now, let us go back to our text and try to fathom its possible meanings, independently of any particular Indic school but not outside the spirit of Indic philosophy.¹ I am aware that to the modern mentality the following may appear as "decadent Scholasticism," but I feel it is right to include classic reasoning.

There is no denying that the main purpose of the entire *Vedānta-Sūtras* is to declare that Brahman is the Absolute, the Supreme Principle, the Cause of everything, whatever the *nature* of this Brahman may be and whatever degree of reality this World may have. The first four *Sūtras*, moreover, are the framework that supports the most authoritative interpretation of the Vedānta:

1. Desire to know Brahman;
2. Brahman as that from which the origin, etc., of the universe proceeds;
3. Brahman as the source of the Scripture;
4. Brahman is known to us through the Scripture.

The dialectical process could be stated thus:

1. The *Vedānta-Sūtras* as a compendium of the whole *śruti* tell us that it is necessary to know Brahman because this knowledge is the height of wisdom, the prerogative of revelation, and the meaning of life. We desire, therefore, to know Brahman. Brahman is the object of our research. However, for this desire to be authentic we must somehow "know" its object; in other words, this Brahman that needs to be known and that we desire to know must already be in some sense "known" to us and have some meaning for us. We must be able (even with a little help, if necessary) to make some sense of the first *Sūtra*, and for that to be possible the word "Brahman" cannot be devoid of meaning. In short, revelation is required. It is necessary, therefore, to clarify what is meant by "Brahman."

2. This is the task of the second aphorism. This Brahman that we desire to know is that from which the origin, etc., of this World are derived. In other words, what we desire to know is *from where* the origin, maintenance, and dissolution of this universe and the end of all desires come, though we do not yet know who or what Brahman is. Moreover, we are not capable of "knowing" it by ourselves. We discover in ourselves only the pressing need to know the origin of everything, the principle and foundation of "this," that is, that of which we are aware when we manage to free ourselves from the slavery of worldly desires. At the height of this urge, on the furthest horizon of this desire, there is Brahman.

¹ As a kind of reparation for not dealing with other great Indian philosophers, let us quote only O. Lacombe, *La doctrine morale et métaphysique de Rāmānuja*, besides the already quoted commentaries of Rāmānuja and Madhva.

3. This Brahman, however, is only known to us in its true aspect through the Scriptures—though this as yet indirect knowledge (*śabda* as *pramāṇa*) should bring us to a direct experience of Brahman. Only a revelation given by him (or it) can reveal to us his (its) true nature. This is especially obvious for two reasons: *first*, we have the Scriptures, which alone tell us what Brahman is; nowhere else do we find this information. *Second*, if we were capable of discovering the nature of Brahman through the mind or the senses, Brahman would no longer be Brahman; it would belong to our human sphere. It would be a part of this World and not its Principle. This will now be the path along which the other *Sūtras* can safely proceed.² What follows is not useless speculation but a strictly necessary procedure for “saving,” on one hand, the transcendence of Brahman and, on the other hand, our possibility of speaking about it. The mere dialectics of immanence-transcendence (for example, in affirming that Brahman is also immanent) does not solve the problem, because no synthesis can be achieved between the two.

² For the sources of the *sūtra*, see, besides the already quoted *TU*, the *SU* III.4; V.5; VI.16.

THE BRIDGE TOWARD TRANSCENDENCE

We would like now to consider the general structure of the question, in the context of its own problematics. In making the following observations we do not arrogate the authority of any *bhāṣyakāra*. It is well known that, at least in Śaṅkara, the desire to know Brahman is born of the *śruti* itself. The anthropological dynamism that we shall read in the text and interpret ontologically is reduced in Śaṅkara to a purely epistemological process—that of attribution or superimposition.¹ Even so, the problem of the *naturale desiderium* (natural desire) for the Absolute occurs at another level. This is not a question of mere human desire—that hunger which is so severely condemned by Buddha and criticized by both Christian and Vedantic Scholasticism—but rather of the ultimate dynamism of Being, reflected in those beings who are conscious of it and whose consciousness already influences this dynamism.

The *Jñāna* of *Jijñāsa*

We may agree with some Indic systems (and disagree with others) that the desire to know Brahman is in itself a "grace" or "gift," and even that a certain "knowledge" of Brahman is given to us either directly or through the Scriptures.² However, this does not help to solve our problem because there is a difference between the *desire* to know Brahman and real *knowledge* of Brahman. The starting point (desire) may contain the ultimate level (knowledge) potentially, embryonically, as it were, but they are clearly not the same thing. Thus, even if the desire to know Brahman were not "natural," but "inspired," there would still be a difference between the *grace* of desiring and the *gift* of realizing this desire.

In one way or another, therefore, we feel the desire to know Brahman. This desire is not the same thing as true (nondual) "knowledge" of Brahman, yet it implies a certain concept of Brahman—a concept that must somehow be the bridge by which we come to full knowledge of Brahman. It is, so to speak, a fine thread that already unites us with Brahman, an ignition point, a kind of identity or at least a communication (not to say communion) that is born and grows from *Brahmajijñāsa* to *Brahmajñāna*, from desire to knowledge. Between these two, however, there is a gap; there is no continuity.

What are the constituents of this desire? Is the formal object of the desire the same as that of the knowledge? In other words, what is the *jñāna* of *jijñāsa*? What is the knowledge inherent in our desire to know? What do we actually know (of Brahman) when we desire to know (Brahman)? This point is of capital importance because it is the link that joins us to Brahman and also seems to be one of the points of contact between Indic and Western philosophy.

¹ *Adhyāsa*, see Śaṅkara's introductory chapter to the *BSBh*, *Adhyāsa-adhyāya*.

² Madhva interprets *atha*, the first word of the *BS*, in the sense of the grace of Viṣṇu.

Our *Sūtra* itself answers this question. We desire to know Brahman; we already have the desire. This means, on the one hand, that we do not yet know Brahman as we *can* know it, since we are still desiring it. That is, we do not know what Brahman is, but have yet to learn. Brahman is unknown to us insofar as we still *desire* to know it. On the other hand, it implies that we have already discovered the importance of Brahman, the place it can and must have in our lives, and that we *know* it is the ultimate and even the formal content of the desire itself.³ The second *Sūtra*, therefore, is characterized by a constitutive tension and a transcendental meaning, since its task is to bring us from where we are to where we desire to be. It cannot give an essential definition of Brahman, because Brahman remains fully unintelligible as long as we are not yet Brahman, as long as we still desire it.⁴ The *Sūtra* can only give us a dynamic description, a verbal, albeit unreal, definition of Brahman. The answer to our search will correspond to the intensity and purity of our desire, and will be intelligible insofar as we, in our present state as desiring beings, are capable of assimilating its meaning. It must be in tune with us, and at the same time, it must be open to the real "definition" of Brahman. The answer must show us the real nature of Brahman and lead us to the realization of our desire, even from the starting point of the (unreal or inauthentic) "content" of that desire. In short, we will have to find a very peculiar answer if we are to meet the dialectical requisites of the problem.

This is the answer given by the *Sūtra*: the Brahman we desire to know, the Brahman we perceive but have not yet fully realized, that we know only in our desire and as an object of desire (and not of knowledge), is *that* from which the origin of *this* derives, *that* which sustains the very existence of *this*. *This* is; everything we know, see, or can imagine—is, in fact, knowledge, sight, imagination, and desire itself. Brahman is the cause of all we call "this," that is, of the World.

We may not know the whole World, but we know a part of it and can well imagine that others know different parts of it. In a certain way we know *this*—the World. The cause of *this*—the cause of the World in general and our world in particular, including ourselves—is Brahman.

We know this World, or at least a part of it. But we know even more than this: we know that this World must have an origin, that it probably had a beginning and appears to need safeguarding (conservation); in short, it seems to postulate a cause. We desire to know Brahman because the World we know is not Brahman. If the World were the Absolute, we would not desire to know anything else. The very desire would have no meaning at all. As it is, however, knowledge of the World is accompanied by the need to know its origin; or, *in concreto*, in knowing an empirical "thing" we recognize that it is what it is because it has its *ultimate* origin elsewhere, not in itself (in the World). We know this World as something originated, needing a foundation, a source, something sustained in its present form and requiring an ultimate reason for its existence. We know this World as *this* (world) and not as Brahman, because in *this* (world) we find there is no ultimacy.

We shall not yet make any conjectures about the nature of this ultimate cause, however, such as whether it must be external (transcendent) or can also be inner (immanent). Let us just say that inherent to the knowledge of a *thing* is the awareness that it is not its own cause. In other words, the *Sūtra* emphasizes the contingency of this World, the metaphysical principle that this World still leaves room for a foundation, a source, an origin, an ultimate reason, a cause.

³ See similar problematics in the West: the Bible, Bernhard, Anselm, Pascal.

⁴ "Sa yo ha vai tat paramāḥ brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati" [He who knows (sees) the supreme Brahman becomes Brahman himself] (*MundU* III.2.9). See *AV* X.7.24.

Jñāna: Knowledge of the Contingent

Some may object that we do not know this contingency by ourselves, but that this knowledge is conveyed to us through the Scriptures of which our *Sūtra* is an explanation. That is to say, we could know this World without even suspecting that it is contingent. It would then be the *śruti* that tells us that the World has a cause and that this cause is precisely Brahman.

However this may be, it does not greatly alter our purpose, since the statement makes sense in itself and we are able (with or without the grace of the Lord) to understand its meaning and accept it either by ourselves or with the help of the Scriptures. We are, therefore, capable of understanding the noncontradiction of the fact that this World has a cause, that it is not an Absolute in itself, that it leaves room for an origin, that it admits a supporting foundation, and so on. It is not against the nature of the World to have a foundation, an origin, a cause, whereas it would be contradictory for the human intellect to admit that Brahman has a higher cause, as in that case it would not be Brahman at all.

In other words, the fact of the contingency of the World does not contradict its nature. It is *primarily* a reasonable statement, whether it be true or false, natural or otherwise, attained by reason alone or with the "help" of some higher illumination. *Second*, it may be true for the fact that it is neither unreasonable nor self-contradictory. If, for instance, the World *may* have a cause but has not, this means that the World has no origin or cause, even though there is "room" for such. If it can have an origin and has not, either this possibility remains open or it is fulfilled by the World itself, which has in itself, therefore, its own origin. In the first case the contingency of the World, that is, that this World has no origin in itself, has already been accepted; in the second case an origin, that is, the World itself, is recognized.

We must be careful, however, not to jump to conclusions. The existence of Brahman has not been proved (even though the foundations for such proof have been laid), nor has anything been said about its essence. We have attempted to show that either the World has its own cause in itself, or that its cause lies beyond it. The World cannot have its cause in itself, however, because we recognize its contingency. If we examine the grammatical expression of our text, we see that it does not say this World is an *idam*, but an *asya*; not a *this* but an *of this*. The genitive (*asya*) is a constitutive property of the things of this World. Beings are "beings" and not Being, precisely because they are be-coming, because they are not exactly a "Being"—they are not *einai*, *esse*, *sat*, *idam*, but in the genitive, *sataḥ*, *ontos*, *entis*, *asya*. Beings are "things," beings and not Being, because they *belong* to Being; beings are not autonomous but are "of," "from," "to" Being itself.⁵ Even if the World were its own cause, there would still be a difference between the *World* as cause and the *things* of the World as an effect of or caused by the same. In other words, whether or not Brahman exists as a separate being and whatever its nature may be, the contingency of things and the noncontingency of their possible foundation must reasonably be admitted.

We come, then, to the following conclusion: this World may have a cause. This is a rational truth, whether or not the help of revelation was needed to reach it, and no matter what the nature of the cause or how this World might have proceeded from it—whether by creation *ex nihilo*, or by some process such as *avidya*, or any other process. The name of that from which the origin, etc., of this World proceeds is Brahman, whose nature is generally revealed to us by the *śruti*. These are the two statements that complete the teaching of our *Sūtra*.

⁵ See R. Panikkar, "Le concept d'ontonomie," in *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Philosophy III* (Brussels, 1953), pp. 182ff.

Jijñāsa: The Desire for Knowledge

We have tried to show that the desire to know Brahman is not only a kind of knowledge of Brahman, but also implies knowledge of the contingency of the World. Nevertheless, a very important existential problem remains: do we have a desire to know an *X*, a beyond, an ultimate, a "Brahman" because we have discovered dissatisfaction and the contingency of the World, or do this contingency and our dissatisfaction with it become noticeable because of an irresistible inner desire for Brahman, for an Ultimate, that we have already "glimpsed" (albeit "through a glass darkly")? Which comes first, the *knowledge* (of the contingency) or the *desire* (for Brahman)? We shall not introduce here the pseudo-problem of the priority of knowledge over will, but merely highlight their intrinsic relationship and the existential character of Indic philosophy.

First of all, as is clear from the verbal form of the desiderative *jijñāsa*, it is not a question of will, impulse, or the like, as such (as an independent faculty) but of a *cognitive* inclination, a yearning to *know*. This relationship could not be better expressed than by the word *jijñāsa*. We must ask ourselves, however, whether it is a *desire to know* or a "*cognoscent*" *desire*. Is it an extracognitive desire that impels us to know, or is it knowledge that arouses the desire within us? Is it a longing to know or an impulse of knowledge itself? Obviously it is both. We have already attempted to describe the cognitive contents of this desire. Let us now turn our attention to the very nature of the desire, this *desiderative knowledge*.

The *Sūtra* begins with a clear definition of such a desire. It speaks of the need to go beyond the things of this World, using them as a springboard to the far shore. The intellectual content of our desire may be very weak and the cognitive part rather vague, but the urge we feel may be strong enough to bring us to the threshold of our destination. The very existence of the desire, whatever the proportion of the cognitive content may be, enables us to leave the realm of pure possibility (the object of the desire) and enter the sphere of reality (the desire itself). The cognitive content merely presents us with the possibility, the noncontradiction, that there is a cause of the World; the naked desire, on the other hand, is in itself a real way toward satisfying this desire, toward the reality of the far shore.

Even after subjecting this desire to epistemological and psychological examination there still remains an ontological factor that can only be interpreted as a perceptible "point" of this transcendence itself, a point where the transcendence finds an "echo," an answer. We have called this "transcendence" because it is different from (our) contingency—the far shore. The ontological structure of this desire appears, then, as a kind of communion with its end or goal. There is a yearning for Brahman not only because Brahman attracts and manifests itself as desirable, so to speak, but also because this desire, this deep point where the desire transcends the bounds of epistemology and psychology, already exists in communication, and therefore in communion, with Brahman. Brahman is not only the goal; it is the very foundation of this desire.

Our previous analysis of this desire revealed its cognitive content, but it is the existential element that urges us toward the final goal. We have no intention of contradicting Śaṅkara when he says that this desire is aroused by the *śruti*, nor are we saying that it leads to wholeness, which would mean the extinguishing of the desire, yet only an existential analysis of the desire can cope with its irreducible singularity. Such a dynamic tendency of our being presupposes many things and is laden with consequences, but it is in the desire itself that our own contingency is embodied. Not only could we not desire Brahman if we already knew ourselves to be it, or if the World were an Absolute, but this desire also reveals our peculiar nature as creatures. It is a desire that cannot be described, only experienced, suffered. The

ineffability of which Indic philosophy is so fond represents the inadequacy of our knowledge, especially regarding ultimate truths but also existence itself, including received existence.

The starting point for a discussion on the existence of God, consequently, would not be the content of a certain knowledge so much as the existential fact of this fundamental desire. Nevertheless, it is not a question of either simple knowledge or pure desire, but of the peculiar human element called *jijñāsa*—the yearning to know combined with desiderative knowledge. If we forget either of these two poles, we lose sight not only of the Indic perspective but also of the possibility of an authentic philosophical endeavor.

Rational and Natural Knowledge

Before we draw any conclusions from our analysis we must first consider the problem that we set aside earlier as irrelevant to our first analysis: the question of whether or not the human mind is able to reach the above conclusions by itself. Does the mind require the help of revelation, or are we dealing with a purely rational and natural truth? In the latter case we would be bordering on a cosmological argument for proving the existence of a supreme principle.⁶ Before proceeding, let us briefly recall some classical distinctions. First of all, we should refer here to the debate on what is meant by the term "human mind," taking into account the different concepts of mind (*manas*, *buddhi*, *citta*, etc.) of the various Indic schools. The basic problem is whether the "human mind" as such is able to reach the Absolute (which may also go by other names). Vedānta would maintain, following the Upanishads, that the only "organ" truly capable of knowing Brahman is the *atman*, since, ultimately, it *is* Brahman.

Revelation, moreover, understood here as a divine manifestation to the human mind, may be necessary both absolutely and relatively. Absolutely, the mind needs revelation because it is incapable even of imagining the existence (or understanding the essence) of any revealed truth. Revealed truth surpasses the power of our reason. Relatively, the mind may need revelation even when the truth is not, as such, beyond the capacity of the human intellect; we may *make use* of revelation in order to arrive at a certain truth, since our intellect is only able to affirm its *possibility*, having no means of ascertaining its actual existence.

If Brahman exists, we come from him; if Brahman is the cause of all that exists, then even the human mind and our natural "lights" are a gift of Brahman, as if they were a participation in his knowledge and, broadly speaking, organs of revelation. When we speak of revelation, however, we are referring to something special and, in a certain sense, extrinsic, not included with human nature as such. It seems beyond dispute that the full "knowledge" of Brahman, the realization of its essence, is absolutely supernatural and demands, therefore, more than just the acceptance of an extrinsic "revelation."

The problem that remains is this: does the knowledge of Brahman, not in its essence but simply as the cause from which the World proceeds, require revelation? In other words, does the knowledge of the existence of a supreme principle, the origin of this World, require revelation, or is it a natural truth? We are not questioning whether or not Brahman has actually revealed this truth. We are more interested in understanding whether human reason is able to go beyond this World and discover the necessity of the existence of Brahman (that

⁶ This kind of approach is found in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school; see G. Chemparathy, *An Indian Rational Theology: Introduction to Udayana's Nyāyakusumāñjali*. This problem is also closely linked with the whole discussion around the proof for the authoritativeness of a scripture (*śāstraprāmāṇyam*), into which we cannot enter here. See, however, G. Oberhammer, "Die Überlieferungsautorität im Hinduismus," in *Offenbarung, geistige Realität des Menschen*, pp. 41–92.

from which and in which the World has its existence), or whether reason must be content merely to acknowledge the possibility, or noncontradiction, of the existence of a first Cause, once it has revealed itself.

The problem thus remains confined to an analysis of the powers of the mind, the crucial point in our philosophical inquiry. To begin with, we should develop a complete epistemology,⁷ but this would require a separate study. We will have to assume it, therefore, and proceed using very common terms, tackling the problem as it presents itself. In other words, what is the meaning of that *buddhi* (discriminative faculty) through which, according to the Upanishads, we are able to see the Supreme?⁸ Obviously, sensory knowledge cannot transcend the object of the senses and, therefore, cannot reach as far as the existence of Brahman, but human reason is not exhausted in sensory knowledge.

All schools of philosophy, not excluding materialism, accept that Man possesses a higher form of knowledge, which could be called "reason," whatever relation it may have to perception and sensation. Yet the mere recognition of reason does not give us an immediate answer to our problem. Reason, in fact, does not actually transcend sensory knowledge, but merely organizes and relates it.⁹ Reason understood simply as a dialectical faculty of *anumana* and *upamana*, inference and comparison, cannot either reach out of the World or penetrate its depths in order to discover beyond and within it that supreme Principle we call Brahman—whether immanent or transcendent.

Have we any other mental faculty besides our reason? An observation may help to clarify an issue that jeopardizes the mutual understanding between Eastern and Western philosophical systems (although, to a certain extent, it is merely a question of vocabulary). The Indic concept of *buddhi*, which we have translated as "reason," should be understood not in the sense of the Kantian *Verstand*, but in the Scholastic sense of *intellectus*, since the terminology changes according to the authors. As a consequence of the Kantian impact on modern Indic philosophers, that which goes beyond reason has been called either "faith" or "intuition." "Faith," then, refers to knowledge of the suprasensible, or rather supawordly, based on authority or other external sources, while "intuition" is understood as suprasensible experience. However, to avoid the risk of becoming sidetracked, we will set aside semantic reflections and go back to our main subject.

The controversial point is whether or not there exists a kind of "knowledge" that reaches the ultra-empirical level without being either sensory knowledge or that higher form of suprarational knowledge that penetrates into the divine reality as such. In other words, if "reason" is by definition confined to the empirical sphere or reduced to the Kantian *Vernunft*, then in order to transcend this World we need another kind of knowledge, a sort of divine realization that comes with the experience. Naturally, if this experience is to be "experienced," it also needs a kind of "higher" organ (the *Vernunft* of the German mystics, the *buddhi* of the *Katha-Upanishad*, and perhaps the *atman*). In that case, only "faith" as an intermediate state, understood as an acceptance of the Scriptures, could help to bridge the gap. However, we will not be able to cross over unless we are sustained by the immediate experience. Defined in the West as "fideism," this attitude excludes the very possibility of a cosmological

⁷ See Śaṅkara, *BSBh* II.4.6, for a short summary of the various cognitive functions such as *buddhi*, *manas*, *abhyākāra*, and *citta*.

⁸ See *KathU* III.12. We shall refrain from commenting on *KathU* III.3–13, which may perhaps be the Indic solution to the whole problem. See also *BG* III.42; VI.21.

⁹ See Śaṅkara's *KenU* II.1: "It is possible to know only that which can be an object of the perception of the senses."

argument, given that only faith can reach the transcendent, and reason, by definition, is unable to transcend the empirical level.

We must, however, emphasize that this is not the traditional Indic attitude, principally because the clear-cut distinction between reason and faith that is typical in the West is alien to Indic philosophy, in the context of which the problem arises differently. And yet our *Sūtra* expresses a cognitive dynamism conducive to the discovery of the contingency of the World. We will not address here the question of whether this knowledge is *arthapatti* (inference) or trust, or embark on a discussion of the possible existence of a higher human "intellect" by which Man discovers the existence of the Transcendent without penetrating its essence. It would not, in any case, be difficult to show that our reason is founded in a peculiar rational intuition. But is human reason able to perceive the contingency of the World?

Not only the *Brahma-Sūtras* but the entire Vedānta and almost all Indic philosophy, including the so-called nonorthodox systems, share an idea of the World that presupposes such an insight: that *this* World is not definitive, that it is not worth becoming attached to since it is not real Being or ultimate reality, because it is neither the Beginning nor the End of Being (or even of the World itself). This conception is so widespread as to represent an actual common denominator of the Indic spirit,¹⁰ and to call it into question or to attempt to prove it would be odd, to say the least. It is considered, in fact, to be the most elementary condition for the study of philosophy and for any intellectual—i.e., spiritual—endeavor worthy of its name.¹¹ There may be discrepancies regarding the positive nature of this principle and its relation to the World, but *neti neti*¹² is virtually the starting point of all Indic speculation and expresses the absolute "incomparability" of Brahman to the World. For the greater part of Indic philosophy, the experience (or we might say the conviction) of the contingency of the World acts as the background against which the problem of reality is viewed.

On the other hand, this conviction is not and cannot be simply a conclusion deriving from a logical type of inference. Rather, it is the result of a spiritual experience. The starting point of an inquiry on Brahman, the desire to know it, implies not only existential dissatisfaction with this World but also a rooted conviction of its contingency. It is obvious that if the problem is viewed from such an existential perspective, the question of the "rational" proof of the existence of God does not arise in the way it does in post-Cartesian thought. Here it arises in congruity with the medieval and ancient metaphysical systems of Europe and is strictly related to the teaching of the Old Testament.¹³

So far we have talked only about Brahman, which is the supreme Symbol to the Vedānta, but if we are to establish a relationship with the West we must also mention its homeomorphic equivalent: God. Both, in fact, perform the same function as ultimate points of reference.

The problems may not be the same but the parallelisms are remarkable, from the description of the "natural desire" for God to the so-called proof of his existence and the nature of his essence. But let us turn back to our study.

For Indic philosophy "reason alone" has little meaning, because (1) reason is not isolated from the rest of our human faculties, our human nature, and (2) it is not self-sufficient even in the highest forms of knowledge.

¹⁰ See the arguments put forward by Kṛṣṇa in the *BG* to convince Ārjuna to fight.

¹¹ Cf., for example, the various commentaries on *BS* I.I.I (especially that of Śaṅkara); *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* I; *Yoga-Sūtra* II.16, etc.

¹² It is well known that *na iti*, *na itī* [not this, not this] is applied primarily to God. It is, in fact, the best description of Brahman. See *BU* II.3.6; and III.9.26; IV.2.4 for the *neti* applied to the *ātman*.

¹³ For the biblical attitude of C. Tresmontant, *Études de métaphysique biblique* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1955), p. 161, for instance.

1. If it is reason that discovers the existence of Brahman, it is a reason incarnated in a human person who has attained some degree of purification, objectivity, freedom of will, and so forth.¹⁴ Reason may be the instrument, but it is not effective unless it is properly used. It is the whole Man who uses it, and he will only use it properly when he is pure, detached, virtuous.

2. It may be that the light and power of reason allow us to discover its existence, but the fact remains that Man is not *reason alone*. After all, though it is very real, "reason" is an abstraction, and the Indic mind rebels against it being transformed into a hypostasis. To those who do not believe in God, the Indic tradition does not say, "Seek, think, strive to investigate with your reason!" but rather, "Do penance, find the right perspective by detaching yourself from the World, look for a spiritual master, search with your whole being. It is not your reason that is weak, it is you who are ill."

If we still insist on the power of "reason alone" to reveal the existence of the supreme principle, Indic philosophy tells us that either Brahman exists, in which case reason is not *alone*, or Brahman does not exist, in which case only reason *is*. But then this solitary reason cannot prove that which, by hypothesis, does not exist.

The problem, therefore, can only be raised as an epistemological hypothesis: what is the instrument by which we come to know of the existence or nonexistence of Brahman? Among the various instruments reason undoubtedly has a special, very important role, as it makes the structure of the World (which is contingent, not the cause of itself) intelligible. At the same time, however, the role of reason is very weak, since it can tell us little or nothing at all about the nature of this cause. According to Indic philosophy, reason only functions in its proper place when it heeds the Scriptures and strives to cooperate with them in order to find a basis for a higher understanding.

¹⁴ See *MundU* III.1.8; *KathU* 11.9; 20; etc.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

An argument for the existence of Brahman may be developed on the basis of what we have said so far, but the Indic mind does not feel the need and prefers to consider Brahman as the starting point rather than the goal. This is why India is more attracted by the characteristics of immanence than those of transcendence, and considers searching for Brahman outside of oneself, as transcendence, almost a betrayal of the inner Brahman. The cosmological argument appears more as a cosmological *presupposition*. It is not so much the vision of this World that leads us to Brahman, as the reverse—the desire to know Brahman enables us to see this World in the proper perspective. The arguments that follow may seem sophisticated or artificial to the modern mind, but I have tried to reproduce accurately both the Vedantic and the Scholastic views on the subject.

If we wish to expound cosmological arguments (in India) we must formulate them not by saying, "We discover that this World is contingent, *therefore* God exists as its cause (if we assume that contingency truly needs a noncontingent foundation)," but rather, "*Because* God exists, we discover the contingency of the World." It is not so much a question of discovering something as of finding something that allows us to discover the true nature of things. The Hindū believer cannot put his faith aside when he deals with vital and ultimate problems.

This attitude may derive from a *heteronomic* view, which can generate confusion between faith and reason, theology and philosophy. Heteronomy is the approach that takes for granted divine transcendence and the contingency of the World. Autonomy is the rational, reflective attitude that assumes that every being has its own independent law, whereas *ontonomy* overcomes the extreme opposition of these two views of reality with an integrated vision of Being. For the autonomic period of Western thought, proof of the existence of God is essential; without it, everything collapses.¹ This is not the case in a heteronomic culture and philosophy.² At this point an ontonomic evaluation of all proof of the existence of God becomes necessary.

Regarding such, we will only say this: proof of any kind implies a starting point, A; a conclusion, B; and the proof itself, which demonstrates B beginning from the postulate A. It

¹ It is in this context that the enormous amount of literature on the theme of the proof of the existence of God should be understood and appraised. For the concepts of heteronomy, autonomy, and ontonomy, see R. Panikkar, *Maya e Apocalisse*, pp. 71ff.

² This does not mean that there have been no such approaches in Indic philosophy, such as the Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika school mentioned above. It would take us too far off the track to analyze the Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika method in the light of what has been said here. Cf., for example, G. Oberhammer, "Zum Problem des Gottesbeweises in der indischen Philosophie," *Numen* 12(1) (January 1965): pp. 134; G. Chemparathy, "Two Early Buddhist Refutations of the Existence of Uśvara as the Creator of the Universe," *WZKS* 12-1 (1968-69) (Festschrift Frauwallner): pp. 85-100; Chemparathy, *An Indian Rational Theology*.

is obvious that the validity (or, in epistemological terms, the certainty) of B cannot be greater than that of A, since A is the foundation on which B rests. Now, to prove the existence of God on the basis of the existence of this World and with the help of reason implies that we have more confidence in the proof itself and in the validity of the means employed than we have in the existence of God. This is a well-known syllogistic rule.³

True believers, or those who do not make a sharp distinction between faith and reason, are existentially unable to have more confidence in their own reason or in the evidence of their senses than in God. They have no need of proof, which they regard almost as blasphemous (even though such proof is valid in a cultural context and that of a certain type of philosophy, which we have called *autonomous*). At most, they will accept that the function of reason is either to clarify the problem or to offer some kind of proof to those who need it; but they will see it basically as a sort of game, like children imitating what adults do in the "real" world.⁴

One thing, however, remains to be considered: between Brahman and the World there is a relationship of cause and effect. Between the higher knowledge of Brahman and empirical worldly knowledge is a rational, and in a sense also natural, knowledge of Brahman as the cause of this World or, more accurately, a knowledge of this World as something that postulates Brahman as its Principle.

Coming back to our *Sūtra*, we could formulate the problem in these terms: Brahman *as such* is unknown and, consequently, undesired (*nil volitum quin praecognitum*, "nothing can be willed before it is known"). There is, however, a point of encounter between the transcendence of Brahman and the immanent World, an intermediate stage that cannot be hypostatized or substantialized since it is only a relationship, an epistemic stage of our "journey" to Brahman. Between these two "landmarks"—below Brahman and above the World—we discover the origin, the preservation, the destructibility, etc., of this World. Beginning from the earth, our "journey" to Brahman brings us to this intermediate stage, which is the *ratio* of the World, its origin, etc. But this is not yet the end of the journey. We have reached the cause of this World, as such, but we have not yet reached Brahman (which is not exhausted in its function as cause of the World). True, the text tells us that this cause is not just a cause but also Brahman, and other Vedantic texts add that if we are to know Brahman we must free ourselves of all our worldly categories. Brahman may indeed coincide with the cause of the World, but the mere recognition of the cause *as cause* is not itself ultimate knowledge. Ultimate knowledge is knowledge of the cause not only as cause but as Brahman.

We are now faced with two different problems. The first concerns our ascent from the World to its cause, and the second consists in recognizing this cause as Brahman, the Supreme, Unique, and Transcendent. It goes without saying that these two progressive states are not two separate subjects but two phases of our spiritual journey. The intermediate stage is but a pause in our theological ascent.

We are attempting to establish a comparison between Indic and Scholastic philosophy, but the problem cannot be posed in this way because Brahman, unlike the Western God, is not so much transcendent as immanent, not so much a *terminus ad quem* as a *terminus ad quo*. And it is precisely here that the mutual enrichment of "comparative philosophies" might be demonstrated, once they have achieved mutual fecundation. For this reason we feel that these pages should not be excluded, though they may appear to be outdated. But let us now come back to our subject.

³ Peiorem sequitur semper conclusio partem [the conclusion always follows the weaker part].

⁴ It is worth pointing out here that to Thomas Aquinas all so-called proofs serve only to demonstrate that belief in God is not irrational.

From the World to Its Cause

What allows us to transcend this World and seek its cause? Why is it that we are not satisfied with the World and feel compelled to reach beyond it, to look for what may be its basis and foundation? Two groups of "reasons" offer the answer to this question; the first concerns our knowledge of the World, and the second the world of our knowledge.

Our Knowledge of the World

We desire to transcend the World and seek its cause when we discover that this World, being subject to change, is contingent and does not contain the foundation of its own being, that it is not the ultimate reality. Our cognitive powers, however, impel us to seek Ultimacy, the Absolute. Our knowledge will stop short of Fullness of Being. Here two almost contrasting ideas come into play: on the one hand, the recognition of the contingency of the World; and on the other hand, the awareness that our reason itself compels us to affirm that either the World is an Absolute or the Absolute lies beyond the World. This is so almost by definition of reason itself because, ultimately, that from which our reason proceeds or in which it ends, having no need of any further explanation or grounds, is the Absolute. The only remaining problem concerns the nature of this idea of the Absolute, about which our reason can say very little. In other words, if we strive to go beyond the World it is because our intellect compels us to do so, except when it presupposes that there is nothing "outside" of the World. Whether such a conclusion is based on a logical justification or an ontological motivation is a problem that remains unsolved, and would appear to be a (gratuitous) presupposition of human thought itself.

The World of Our Knowledge

We desire to transcend the World when we discover that it is not an Absolute. But why do we discover that the World is contingent? We have already seen that the World could be postulated as the Absolute, but this would be merely a verbal discussion since this Absolute "World" would not be the World that we see and experience. The problem therefore remains. Indic speculation might reply that we experience the World as contingent because it *is* contingent; we can suppose the existence of an ultimate cause because such a cause exists, and if we desire to "prove" the existence of an ultimate cause it is because such a cause exists and Existence itself leads us to want to transcend the World and reach It. God himself is the cause of our desire and the driving force of our rationality. Thus, when we seek to prove the existence of God we are presupposing Him, since, if He were nonexistent, we would not even have the desire to do so.

No doubt a logical mind could argue that while this is all beyond dispute, it does not prove the existence of God, for the very fact that it presupposes it. The Indian reply would be, "I could reply that my interlocutor falls into a vicious circle, since he *could not* question whether or not God exists if God did not exist. If God did not exist, my interlocutor could not exist either, let alone consider the problem." Here we can see clearly where the two views agree and disagree: one discovers God as the logical implication and ontological presupposition of the question of his existence, while the other discovers God as the logical conclusion and ontological result of the question of his existence. Both lines of thought are congruent, though not interchangeable, and both have the same formal structure—an insight into God's existence based on the facts of the actual experience. Both are means or mediations rather than

immediate intuitions; one discovers God in the implications, the other in the conclusions.⁵ For the sake of simplicity we have used the name "God" here, but it is clear that we are still at the first stage of recognizing a First Cause of the World.

The answer to our first question, then, would be, "That which allows us to transcend this World and seek its cause is God himself." But *how* does this come about? Evidently by means of our reason, or our intellect. Again, how does God guide our intellect? Does he guide it through special illumination or through its own natural light? To this we can confidently answer that God can use the natural light of reason as regards the discovery of the First Cause, since this truth is not beyond the limits of reason. Let us, therefore, leave aside the question of whether God grants our cognitive faculty some sort of special illumination or simply allows our reason to grasp it with its own natural light—in other words, whether the *fruti* awakens in us the knowledge of Brahman or a special "grace" is needed.

From the Cause to Brahman

Excursus on Brahman

Before we go any further, for the sake of avoiding misunderstandings I would like to add here a note. In Hinduism, Brahman is not a person and, therefore, is not regarded as a personal God but as the Absolute, which is identified with God only in the transpersonal sense expressed by the word "Godhead." Nevertheless, in order to understand this peculiar relationship (Brahman-God) in its proper context, we must *first* explain briefly some of the steps in the development of the concept of Brahman and, *second*, specify our reasons for this equivalence between God and Brahman, which agree with modern scholars, though not exactly in the same sense.⁶

The Vedas present Brahman mainly as a mysterious power inherent to sacrifice and sacred prayers (*mantra*), which fortifies the Gods and provides a kind of foundation for the whole of existence. There are several approaches to this power that do not relate it to sacrifice and ritual. In the *Atharva-Veda*, for example, it is identified with *skambha*, the *axis mundi* or support of the universe, and with the supreme Lord.⁷ In the *Brahmanas* Brahman is sometimes identified with Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures.⁸ In the Upanishads Brahman is closely related to the quest for a "world-ground," a first principle. "Brahman is called the aim."⁹ In various Upanishads the mystery of Brahman is approached through the Upanishadic method of successive correlations and identifications between cosmic and psychological realities, the culmination of which is the identification of *ātman* (the inner Self) with Brahman (the cosmic ground).

⁵ There is a well-known encounter between Socrates and a certain Indian philosopher, in which the latter asked Socrates what his philosophy was based on. "Human life," replied Socrates. The wise man from India burst out laughing and asked how one can know human reality without first knowing divine reality. In fact, Socrates's first disciple, Plato, was already of the same idea as the Indian thinker. See Eusebius, *Præparatio evangelica* 1.8 (apud M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* II [Munich: Max Hueber, 1954], p. 64).

⁶ See R. E. Hume and S. Radhakrishnan in, respectively, the *Outline and Introduction* of their Upanishad translations (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*). See also G. G. Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Upanishads*, pp. 441ff. On the concept of Brahman, see L. Renou, "Sur la notion de Brahman," *Journal Asiatique* 237 (1949): pp. 7-46; J. Gonda, *Notes on Brahman* (Utrecht, 1950).

⁷ Parameśhīn, cf. *AV* X.7.17, etc.

⁸ See *SB* XI.2.3.1, etc.

⁹ *MundU* II.2.4.

At some of these stages Brahman is identified with life-breath,¹⁰ food,¹¹ and with a series of gradual identifications in the *Chandogya-Upanishad*.¹² All these are based on the idea of the All,¹³ the Reality of all things,¹⁴ the Reality of realities,¹⁵ the Imperishable,¹⁶ the One.¹⁷

A detailed analysis would show that the object of this search is the Absolute, not in an abstract sense, but closely related to personal experience. Now, as the question of Being always arises from that of beings, and beings in their mobility aim toward their own contingency, Brahman must also imply non-Being.¹⁸ We might say that all these different approaches to Brahman point to the mystery of the Absolute.¹⁹

At this point, two major problems arise, the *first* of which is the relationship of Brahman with *atman*. Although this important relationship directly involves our subject, it presents us with a similar question. *Atman*, the object of the inner search, the Spirit or Being that is in the deepest part of Man, came to be identified with Brahman, the foundation of Being.²⁰ Each is ultimate in its own sphere and, in a certain way, irreducible—*atman* in the anthropological context, Brahman in the cosmological realm. The discovery of this identity represents one of the apexes of Indic philosophy and the cornerstone of the Advaita-Vedānta,²¹ though this is a subject we cannot develop here.

This, however, is not the only creative tension in Indic thought. The *second* problem, in fact, though it has been the object of less clamorous discussion, is no less important than the first and equally abounding in vital consequences. This is the question of the relationship between Brahman and God. Both names refer to the same reality, yet they seem to connote different functions. Brahman, being essentially immanent, has its place at the end of philosophico-theological speculation, on the limits of the intellect. God, on the other hand, is the purpose and object of human adoration and love. Both refer, ultimately, to the same mysterious One, because our will and our intellect will not stop until they reach the Absolute. The God that Man worships cannot be only the foundation of being or the mere condition of existence—he must also be a subject, an “I,” a person.

That which, for the sake of simplicity, we call “God” has been expressed in various ways during the development of the Vedic-Upanishadic religion. Besides the so-called henotheistic attitude of the *Rig Veda*, the two symbols that have contributed most to the idea of one God are the Puruṣa of the late Vedic period²² and Prajapati, the Lord of Beings of the Brahmanas. When the exuberant Vedic deities withdrew discretely from the scene, both the uniqueness of God and the absoluteness of Brahman were revealed. After the affirmation of Brahman in the oldest Upanishads in opposition to a plurality of Gods, a corresponding countermove-

¹⁰ See *KausU* III.2; *BU* III.9.9; VI.1.13 (*CUV* I.13); etc.

¹¹ See *TU* II.2; III.7–9; III.10.6; *MaitU* VI.12–14; *CU* VII.9.2, etc.

¹² *CU* VII; the series is name, word, mind, purpose, thought, contemplation, wisdom, energy, water, radiance, space, memory, hope, life.

¹³ *CU* VI.12.3; see *CU* VI.1.3–6; *BU* I.4.10; *PraśnU* IV.10–11.1, etc.

¹⁴ See *CU* VI.1.3–6.

¹⁵ *Sāyasya sūryam*, *BU* II.1.20.

¹⁶ *MundU* II.1.2; *SU* V.1; *BU* III.8.8, etc.

¹⁷ *BU* III.9.1–9; *MaitU* VI.17; *MandU* 7.

¹⁸ *CU* VI.2.1; *TU* II.7.

¹⁹ Our references are not exhaustive, but are only meant as an introduction to the problem.

²⁰ See *BU* II.5.19; IV.425; *CU* VIII.14.1, etc.

²¹ See O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta*.

²² See *RV* X.90, etc. See J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, esp. the chapter “The Gods’ Rise to Superiority,” pp. 25–33.

ment took place in the *Kātha*, *Mundaka*, and *Svetasvatara* Upanishads in favor of one God.²³ Although very often the distinction between God and Brahman is not very clear-cut, here God appears different from Brahman, which is even called his source.²⁴ We shall come back to this aspect in relation to the concept of *Īśvara*.

Modern-day scholars are still discussing this twofold problem.²⁵ Brahman is the ultimate end, but God would have no meaning if he also were not the ultimate end. Their natures (if they may be called so) appear to be very different. Brahman is abstract, general, all-pervading from below (as it were), common to everything and the presupposition of all; God is concrete, personal, all-embracing from above (as it were), calls us to union, yet remains transcendent, the purpose and end of every being. Essentially, Brahman is immanent; God, transcendent.²⁶

Indic speculation identifies God and Brahman, even though their characteristics do not seem to coincide. The attributes of the Ultimate, after all, are perceived through our means of knowledge. Nevertheless, just as the identification between Brahman and *ātman* may be criticized, so might also an identification between Brahman and God. Let us first make another important distinction.

a. *From an essentialistic point of view*, I would agree with the above criticism, which in Scholastic terms could be expressed as follows: if Brahman is in some way the *ens commune*, the quiddity of all beings, the universal substratum and the one primordial condition of all things, it cannot be identified with the *ens realissimum*, the personal God, the source of all beings and absolute reality, which is not only in everything but also *above* all things. This problem merits a separate study, but here we can at least make a brief observation.²⁷

Although metaphysics cannot be reduced to anthropology, much less to psychology, we should recognize the close ties that exist between these three disciplines. Our mode of thinking, our methods of investigation, are conditioned not only by the nature of the object but also by the anthropological structure of the subject. It seems, then, that our search for the Absolute may have two different orientations, since the object one pursues will differ according to the path one follows. From a metaphysical point of view, the Upanishads are one of the masterpieces of the human mind in the search for the foundation of the World and of the universe, the "real of the real" (*satyasya satyam*). The search, however, can be conducted in two ways. We can look for the foundation, the Absolute, the support; or we can seek the end, the ultimate goal, the summit. In other words, we are constitutively led to search for this principle either below, in the infrastructure common to all beings, or above, as the end or fulfillment of all things. This is not simply about immanence and transcendence, even though our observations here bear some relation to these two categories. The ways of immanence and transcendence have to do with the object, while here we are concerned with the two different ways in which the subject, Man, can proceed in his search for Reality.

The first way involves mainly searching for that which all things have in common, the foundation shared by all. Everything that is *is*, and this *Being* is everything that is. Every

²³ See the wonderful description of the *puruṣa* in *MundU* II.1.2. See also *SU* I.8; V.5–6, etc.

²⁴ See *MundU* III.1.3.

²⁵ See S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 42 sq., also R. D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*; J. Gonda, *The Concept of a Personal God in Ancient Indian Religious Thought in Selected Studies*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 1–26.

²⁶ These problems, of course, refer to the monotheistic God and not the Trinity.

²⁷ See the philosophies of K. Jaspers, M. Heidegger, etc. See also in Scholastic philosophy: "In verità l'Essere ci si presenta sempre come il fondamento assoluto di tutti gli oggetti e come ciò, che non può essere ridotto ad og-getto" (J. B. Lortz, "Mythos, Logos, Mysterion," in *Il problema della demitizzazione* [Rome: Archivio di Filosofia, 1961], p. 121).

being is an entity because it is a part or a manifestation (*vivartavada*) or a transformation (*pariṇamavada*) of *Being* itself. *Being* is, therefore, the origin of all, because it is all; it is the source of all beings because it *is* all beings. All that *is* is simply this. Certain Greek philosophers referred to this concept as prime matter; the Upanishadic philosophers have called it Brahman. Everything that *is* is rooted in this substratum, which alone is common to all things; it is truly the all and the foundation of everything.²⁸ In whatever form *Being* reveals itself, this form exists only insofar as it is Brahman (*Being*), the substratum of all things.²⁹ Man's yearning for unity and his psychological inclination toward immanence may be two important factors in this search for the foundation of the World as the common basis of every being.³⁰ Moreover, there is also a certain feminine aspect in this conception of Brahman as the "matrix" and womb of all that exists.

The second way has the opposite characteristics. The dominant factors here are Man's longing for the sublime and his psychological orientation toward transcendence. What is sought is alterity rather than identity. This conception of God as Creator and Active Principle reveals a certain masculine aspect.

This second way involves a search that moves, we might say, in an upward rather than downward direction. What beings have in common is not the most important aspect; it merely allows us to give the same name to similar things. Every being is, in fact, unique, and the idea of a common being or "prime matter" in which all things share and for which they exist is merely an abstract notion of the mind.

The Ultimate we are attempting trying to describe is not pure transcendence; it is also origin, beginning, cause—the entity by which all other beings are that sustained and created. If Brahman is the *One*, God is the *Other*. The return of all beings to the Absolute is not considered as a dissolution of individual uniqueness, as in the case of the merging with Brahman, but rather as a union with God, a resurrection of all things on earth, because the foundation of the World is not a subjacent and preexisting identity, but a sublime communion that is still to be attained.

The first way is particularly oriented toward identity, immanence, unity; the second is more aware of diversity, transcendence, alterity. Indic speculation for the most part is inclined to seek identity, while Semitic thought is more inclined to emphasize the uniqueness of every being and the differences between beings. The first *forma mentis*, typically Indic, probes the depths of *Being* to find the truth; the second, on the other hand, is directed upward and seeks the truth above. To ignore differences and to ignore identity are both one-sided attitudes. To find a balance between these two tendencies is one of the functions of every mature philosophy, once it has learned to find its way through the twofold search for the profound and the sublime.

In conclusion, we could say that the conception of Brahman cannot coincide *simpliciter* with that of God; the two conceptions are as unlike as pure potentiality and pure actuality. Though we recognize that the Absolute transcends every conception, even so our ideas about "Him" are not irrelevant so long as we live in this temporal World.

²⁸ See *AV* X.8.2. See M. Eliade, *Yoga* (London, 1958), p. 115 *et passim*. On *skambha* in the *AV*, see also the interesting remarks by E. A. Solomon, *Summaries of Papers, Submitted to the XX Session of the All-India Oriental Conference* (Bhuvaneshwar, 1959), pp. 22–23.

²⁹ In the *maṇḍala* and *yantra*, the central point (*bindu*) symbolizes the undifferentiated Brahman. See M. Eliade, p. 219; G. Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala* (London: Rider & Co., 1961).

³⁰ See the famous comparison of Gauḍapāda, *Āgamaśāstra* III.3.9, referring to the one space limited by several jars and reverting to the same space once the jars are broken (so it is with the *jīvas* and *ātman*).

No conception of the Absolute can coincide with another from a different tradition. The Muslim and the Christian concepts of God, for example, though they have much in common, are essentially different because of the Christian Trinitarian idea of God, which is the basis of belief in Christ as the Son of God. Within Christianity itself, the Thomistic conception of God is different from that of Duns Scotus; that of Leibniz is not the same as that of Descartes, or of any other thinkers belonging to different schools of metaphysical thought. A fortiori we may say that the idea of Brahman is not the theistic idea of God.

b. *From a vital and existential point of view* both these conceptions, that of Brahman and that of God, though different, indicate a homeomorphic equivalence (whether we call it Being, Ultimate Truth or Absolute). The Brahman that is considered passive, nonactive, and substructural, and is recognized as the cause of the World, may not bear philosophical analysis, or it may, on the other hand, force us to reconsider our conception of God, but it certainly points toward a Reality that many other traditions call "God." Likewise, the God who appears as Creator, active, transcendent, and masculine, and is considered the provider and keeper of this World may not be impervious to the attacks of philosophical speculation, ancient or modern, and we may need to completely reconsider our concept of his nature—though there is no doubt that refers to the same Mystery that the other tradition calls "Brahman."

We have used the terms Reality and Mystery, but it should be clarified (as we have explained elsewhere) that the two symbols are *homeomorphic equivalents*, that is, they perform equivalent functions.

If we attempt, in fact, to penetrate the *res significata* (as Thomas Aquinas would say) and reach the existential level that we spoke of earlier and that transcends all conceptions, we will find ourselves within that Absolute that constitutes the Ultimate Reality and its Mystery. However, in speaking of this Absolute we can only use words as symbols, which may be interpreted in different ways depending on the cultural tradition. It remains certain, however, that all the words refer to a Mystery, even though all words are inadequate. This Mystery is never fully expressed by any symbol, because it is inexhaustible and symbols are limited, finite. Mysteriously, however, the infinitude of the Ultimate Reality allows even "misguided missiles" to reach it, because "Ultimate Reality" is itself a symbol. And in this lies the ultimate foundation of tolerance, which could well be described as intellectual humility.

For this reason we feel entitled, to a certain degree, to counterbalance the philosophical divergencies that belong to the *essential* order and to proceed in our study of the nature and function of that Mystery that the Indic tradition calls Brahman.³¹ Only if we are part of a living tradition, in fact, are we able to contribute to its progress—and this applies equally to the Hindū and the Christian traditions.

Even on a purely theoretical plane the problem is far from being resolved in favor of one position or the other. Within Indic philosophy itself, in fact, there is a great deal of discussion about the concept of Brahman, and it would be too one-sided to define Brahman exclusively as indiscriminate Being.³²

³¹ I would agree with the remarkable study of R. C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times*, except perhaps in his disparaging interpretation of Advaita, which he identifies with a monolithic monism. I think that Advaita Vedānta, in spite of its monistic danger—only too real in many of its representatives—contains a deeper truth that should not be easily dismissed in favor of an unqualified theism. The Christian Trinity is something more than pure theism. God is not just *one* Person, yet neither is he *three* Gods.

³² Only too well known is the thematic link between *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* Brahman.

Brahman is not only an indefinite, immanent, unconscious foundation; it is also supreme consciousness. Brahman is transcendent.³³

The *jñānin* may have discovered Brahman, and the *bhakta* God; but then the relation between Brahman and God must be discovered, and this, in a certain sense, is as important as the identification of *ātman* with Brahman. The concept of a personal God, without being balanced out by the concept of Brahman, risks becoming transformed into an anthropomorphic idol. Likewise, the transpersonal Brahman, without the complementary vision of Brahman as God, risks dissolving into a mere abstraction of the *ens commune*. I believe, however, that Indic wisdom offers immense possibilities for exploring the concept of the Absolute.³⁴ The famous dichotomy that Pascal speaks of, between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is precisely what India has always struggled to overcome. The Upanishads began in ancient times to discuss the problem of unification, which was later taken up by medieval Indic schools of thought with renewed speculative vigor.³⁵ There could not be, in fact, one God for devout believers and another, a foundation of the World, for philosophers. No one could have been satisfied with an amorphous Brahman; they wanted a living Brahman, pure consciousness, perfect bliss, and Supreme Reality, not just an equivalent of the sum of all beings, but that which, though existing in all beings, cannot be resolved in them.³⁶

It is not our task here to examine whether Indic philosophy has fulfilled this synthesis; it will suffice to say that within Christian philosophy even such a great theologian as Thomas Aquinas was not completely successful in sealing a union between the philosophical God of Aristotle (prime mover, ultimate cause, absolute Being without relation to the World) and the living God who (to use anthropomorphic language) cares for Man and loves the World to the point of "sending" the eternal Word, his only-begotten Son, to save it.

Summing up, we could say that Brahman and God are *materialiter* the "same" reality but *formaliter* different. In other words, they both point to the same supreme reality, but from two different points of view; consequently, the two conceptions of the Absolute are substantially different and cannot be equated. Yet if we are aware of this double perspective we can understand that, in spite of the differences, both languages speak of a human problem. And since both strive to express the Absolute, a dialectic is established between them, in which each relies on the complementary aspect of the other. The concept of Brahman needs (so to speak) a more "concrete" aspect, and this gives rise to the concept of Īśvara with its relative problems. On the other hand, it is not enough to consider God solely as supreme Lord, and this brings us back to the philosophical discussion on God and the problem of the "God of the philosophers." Hopefully, therefore, one of the most important results of the encounter between philosophies and cultures today may be a more in-depth inquiry into the nature of the Absolute. To avoid misunderstanding, we should bear in mind that whenever we attempt to clarify a relationship we are forced to stretch the meaning of the words to the limit. God and Brahman are not merely two perspectives of the "same thing,"

³³ In addition to the former references, cf. *TU* II.6; *CU* III.12.6; *KathU* IV.9; VI.13; *MaitU* VI.22; *MundU* II.2.8; *SU* I.13; *BU* IV.4.20; *KenU* II, etc.

³⁴ See O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta*; C. Isherwood and H. Jacobi, *Die Entwicklung der Gottesidee bei den Indern* (Bonn-Leipzig: Schroeder, 1923); N. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*; J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*.

³⁵ Besides different schools of Vedānta and Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika, we should also mention the rich, important school of Kashmir Śaivism, as well as other *bhakti* schools. After all, no *bhakti* can stop learning, and no *jñānin* can stop loving. See also J. E. Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India*.

³⁶ See the famous passage of the *Gītā*, *BG* IX.4–5; cf. also VII.12.

because both God and Brahman include their own respective "perspectives." We may say they are two ways of speaking about the "same thing" if we mean that language also belongs to the reality of which it speaks. Ultimately, I am not proposing a synthesis but suggesting a form of comprehension and mutual enrichment.

The Final Stage of the Discussion

Throughout the history of Indic philosophy we come across various arguments demonstrating that without the Scriptures the reality of Brahman cannot be "known."³⁷ In order to identify the cause of the World with the Absolute we have to take one more epistemological step. Even if most of the arguments we have made so far were accepted, they would still not be proof. The First Cause is, in a certain way, divine, but if God is to be a Reality we must pursue the inquiry further.

We have not yet proved that the cause of the World is one, or that it is not comparable with that which, in the empirical World, we call "cause." If the concept of "cause" has any intellectual meaning we must acknowledge a *primum analogatum* that will allow this discussion.

The more difficult question to solve is whether this one supreme cause is identical to or different from the absolute and transcendent Brahman, Cause of the World, Demiurge, Prime Mover, Creator, divine Power, Īvara (to use some of the names of the different philosophical conceptions which, though not equivalent, all indicate the principle of the World, but not the Absolute *as such*). According to Vedānta all this is not yet Brahman; our text, in particular, tells us that Brahman is *that from which* the whole being of the World proceeds, but it does not say that this cause can be identified with Brahman.

We know the main philosophical reason for this: if without due discrimination we make Brahman responsible for the World, if we, as it were, bind Brahman to the World, then it becomes difficult to maintain the transcendence, the absoluteness, of Brahman. A dependent Brahman, a relative Absolute, are contradictions in terms of the context of an *armavadin* ontology. On the other hand, absolute independence would make the argument for Brahman completely superfluous, if not inconceivable, and would contradict all that we (and our *Sūtra* in particular) have said so far. No assertion can be made about something that has no relationship with us and the World in which we live.

Some philosophical schools of theist inspiration have tried to get around this difficulty by stating that the relationship between God as First Cause and the World is not *real* and, therefore, the reality of the effect, with all its variations, does not impinge on the simplicity and independence of the Cause; thus divine causality is of a precisely unique type, since the dependence it creates is one-sided.³⁸ This theory, in fact, in itself transcends dualism and discreetly opens the door to the *Advaitic* solution. The monistic attitude seeks to solve the problem by denying any kind of dualism that might mar the exclusive reality of Brahman, even though by so doing it creates a new dualism because it is not possible to deny the existence of "appearances."

In fact, neither dualism nor pure monism can resolve this problem. Dualism opens a gap that it has difficulty afterward in closing, while monism oversimplifies the matter by eliminating the problem instead of solving it, or "throwing the baby out with the bathwater."

³⁷ See Sara Grant, "Sankara's Conception of Śruti as a Pramāṇa," in *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, pp. 340–59; Tilmann Vetter, "Die Funktion von Zentralsätzen der vedischen Offenbarung im System Sarvajñātman's," in *Offenbarung, geistige Realität des Menschen*, pp. 121–32.

³⁸ This is precisely the Thomistic position in Scholastic philosophy.

All this leads us to the almost inevitable paradox that almost all theologico-philosophical schools formulated in one way or another: identity and diversity coexist and are both real. The harmonious or, more precisely, noncontradictory synthesis of both these perspectives is the touchstone of true metaphysics. First of all, then, let us look at the two opposing aspects of the problem.

There is identity, because if Brahman, or God or the Absolute (three concepts that for the time being we shall take as equivalent) is more than an empty word, there cannot be anything outside of it, and the First Cause is, by definition, the ultimate end that our knowledge can formally conceive on a metaphysical plane. Either there is a First Cause and it is Brahman, or there is no First Cause at all—and, vice versa, either Brahman is the First Cause or there is no Brahman at all. If these two could stand separately side by side without any kind of relationship, Brahman would no longer mean anything to us. It would neither be the First Cause nor have anything to do with the World or a First Cause. Strictly speaking, it could not even be considered transcendent, because there would be no room for it, either epistemologically or ontologically. In other words, all that we can ever come to know is contained in the First Cause, since, if we could go beyond it, it would no longer be a *first* cause. All Being, moreover, is exhausted in the First Cause, and a super-being is either another kind of being, and is therefore included in the First Cause, or else it has some relation to "Being" (which is contrary to our premise), and in this case, the First Cause would no longer be such and Brahman would thus be related to it.

On the other hand *there is diversity*, because if the First Cause were only a first cause and nothing else (i.e., Brahman also), it would only have ontological priority in relation to other beings, but it would not be ontologically different from them; it would simply be their cause. This cause would be only the Lord of the World, not Brahman *in itself*. If the First Cause were not of a different nature altogether from the World, it could not have the characteristics of perfection, simplicity, independence, and so on, that the World does not have. If the First Cause were just the first link in a chain of causation, why stop there? What makes this particular link absolutely the first? What makes us suppose that there is no previous link? The only possible answer is to deny the value of the metaphor and say that the First Cause is of a *different* nature than its effects and, therefore, is *more* than just a *first* cause. In other words, its being "first" is not a numerical but a transcendental quality. The First Cause has a special nature, richer, transcending even its own causal function; it has an elusive aspect that cannot be reduced simply to its being "first." The First Cause *in itself*, and not merely as cause, is Brahman. The fact of being the First Cause is not exhausted in its causal function. This is only its relation-to-the-World, to us—its knowable aspect. Its innermost being, its infinite transcendence, its hidden side, is Brahman. Therefore, the concept of the First Cause (as such) and the concept of Brahman are not the same, though they refer to the same Supreme Reality. What is the nature of the identity and the difference between these two concepts? This is the question we shall attempt to shed light on in the last section.

First, however, we must expound a little more on the answer to our initial question: how, then, can we know Brahman without recognizing the First Cause? This is the key question of the cosmological argument. We now have all the data we need to find the answer we have been seeking. The cosmological argument is activated to the same extent as the human intellect is capable of grasping the identity between the First Cause and Brahman. If we stop at their diversity, the argument will remain suspended, incomplete, and "ready" to accept a higher instance if it happens to present itself. The structure of the argument has two parts, which can be stated in four propositions:

1. The World requires a foundation.
2. This foundation must present itself as ultimate and distinct from this World.
3. It exists at least to the same degree that this World exists and our reason postulates it.
4. Its nature lies beyond the capacity of our understanding, though we can affirm that it "exists" and is "distinct" from the World.

The third point shows that the argument has a weak side, which needs an entire philosophy to defend it: to what degree does this World *exist*, and what power does our reason have to transcend it? Only on the basis of one existent can another existent be deduced. Existence in itself, as the act of *existing*, is the mysterious bond between God and the World. Whether the philosophy we adopt is the cause or the effect that makes us accept God and the World and recognize the validity of such an argument is another question, which exceeds the limits of this study.

ADVAITA AND TRINITY

The Problem of Īśvara

Let us now move on to another aspect of this same problem of the identity and diversity of God and the First Cause, remaining true to the spirit of this work, which strives to accommodate Indic inspiration without losing the Western perspective. The question is that of the relation between Brahman, the Absolute, the Transcendent, the Unknown-Unknownable; and Īśvara, the Lord, the Creator, the personal God.

In the following paragraphs it is not my intention to subject Indic philosophy to a critical examination or attribute to it things that it does not say; nor do I wish in any way to do violence to Christian theology. I cannot, however, deny the quiet and humble conviction that we are facing here not only one of the deepest intuitions of Indic wisdom but also a corresponding insight that occurs in at least one aspect of the Christian dogma of the Trinity. The Trinity presents itself as an unexpected answer to the inevitable request for a mediator between the One and the Manifold, the Absolute and the Relative, between Brahman and the World. This, in my opinion, is not just a Vedantic problem but, ultimately, that of other cultures also. The *Amr* of the Qur'an, the *logos* of Plotinus, and the *Tathagata* of Buddhism, for example, arise out of similar needs in their respective traditions to find an ontological link between the two opposite and apparently irreducible poles of the Absolute and the Relative. Before we continue, however, we should first make a brief excursus on the Indic concept of Īśvara.

Īśvara (which includes also the names *īśa* and *īśana*) is the Lord, the omnipresent God and point of convergence of the theistic tendencies of the Upanishads that supplant and, at the same time, resurrect the "henotheism" of the Vedas.¹ One of the oldest Upanishads begins with the word *īśa*: "All this, whatsoever there is, is enveloped by the Lord."² On this level there is no clear distinction between the cosmic and the personal aspect of the godhead, between Brahman and Īśvara. In the later Upanishads, such as *Śvetāśvatara*, the personal aspect becomes more prominent and the Lord is called the One God (*eka deva*).³ But even here, where Īśvara

¹ The term *Īśvara* does not appear in the Rig Veda (except for the participle *īśāna*, "powerful, mighty"), but there are a few references in the *Atharva-Veda*, denoting divine powers (e.g. *AV* XI.4.1 and 10; *XIX*.6.4; *XIX*.53.8, etc.). On the idea of *Īśvara* or God in general, see, besides the above-quoted literature, J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens I*, pp. 264ff.; Gonda, "The Concept of a Personal God in Ancient Indian Religious Thought," art. cit.; Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*; G. Oberhammer, "Die Gottesidee in der indischen Philosophie des ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausends," *Zeitschr. f. kath. Theol.* 89(4) (1967): pp. 447–57; and also M. D. Shastri, "History of the Word *Īśvara* and Its Idea," *The Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavana Studies* 10 (Benares, 1938), pp. 35–63.

² *IsU* 1.

³ See *SU* IV.11ff.; VI.10ff.

has risen to the heights of supreme Lord, creator, ruler, protector, and refuge,⁴ he remains closely linked with other concepts like *atman*, Brahman, and *Puruṣa*, combining in himself the qualities of all of them.⁵ As Lord of time he is both today and tomorrow.⁶ From terror of him the wind blows, from terror the sun rises, and he is Lord over death.⁷ The Upanishadic conception of *Īśvara* is so rich that here we can only cite a few of its aspects.

The sacred text that has obviously had the greatest influence on both the philosophical and the religious development of the idea of God (independently of "confessional" differences) is the *Bhagavad Gītā*, one of the three authoritative texts of the Vedānta (the *prasthānatraya*). In the *Gītā*, the Lord (variously referred to as *Īśvara*, Prabhu, Bhagavan, *Puruṣottama*, and other names) reveals himself as a completely personal being identified with Kṛṣṇa, who is both immanent and transcendent. Here, in addition to all his attributes, his changeless nature, and his powers, what is important is the emphasis that the *Gītā* places on the activity of the Lord. Although he is eternally free and not obliged to perform any task, he is engaged in the creation, preservation, destruction, and salvation of the World.⁸ The relation between *Īśvara* and Brahman is illustrated in an interesting passage that refers to Brahman as the womb in which the Lord plants his seed, making him the father of all beings.⁹ The most salient feature of the divine revelation of the *Gītā* is God's great love for his devotees and the loving surrender (*bhakti*) of these to their Lord.¹⁰

Since the Vedantic conception of *Īśvara* has been influenced by *samkhya* and yoga, we may mention the fact that this idea also appears in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali,¹¹ in which it says that meditating on or surrendering to *Īśvara* is one of the means of attaining the goal of yoga.¹² *Īśvara* is described as a special kind of spirit (*puruṣa*) that is free from the influence of affliction (*kleśa*), action (*karma*), and its effects;¹³ he is omniscient, the *guru* of all former *gurus*, and he is not limited by time.¹⁴ The symbol by which he is known is OM, the mystic syllable called *praṇava*.¹⁵ The commentary by Vyasa adds that the essential difference between a liberated soul and *Īśvara* is that *Īśvara* is eternally free and has never been restricted.¹⁶ In classical yoga, *Īśvara*, though not a central figure, has been accepted as a possible alternative approach, probably because some theistic schools have advocated devotion to him. He is the ideal (so to speak) of the *yogin*, since he is eternally free and pure.

The Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika school, which was basically a reaction against the Buddhist rejection of *Īśvara*, developed a theory and rational proof of his existence and his role as creator

⁴ See BU IV.4.22; SU III.1ff. etc.

⁵ See BU IV.4.15; SU III.7ff.; MundU II.1.2ff., etc.

⁶ See KathU IV.13.

⁷ See TU II.8.

⁸ See BG III.22–24; IV.13–14.

⁹ BG XIV.3; cf. MundU III.1–3.

¹⁰ See the selected texts on "God," "Bhakti," and "Parā Bhakti," in R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gītā* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 453ff., 437ff., 446ff.

¹¹ See, for instance, K. C. Bhattacharyya, "The Notion of *Īśvara*," in *Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 317–26; G. Oberhammer, "Gott, Urbild der emanzipierten Existenz im Yoga des Patañjali," *Zeitschr. f. kath. Theol.* 86(2) (1964): pp. 197ff.

¹² *Īśvarapraṇidhānād vā*, YS I.23.

¹³ YS I.24.

¹⁴ YS I.25–26.

¹⁵ YS I.27.

¹⁶ Vyāsa Bhāṣya on YS I.24.

without relying on "revelation."¹⁷ The other classical system (*darsana*) in which Īśvara plays a central role is, of course, the Vedānta, with its various subschools. We have already discussed the position of Śāṅkara.¹⁸ His followers were so keen to preserve the absolute purity and transcendence of Brahman and its total uncontamination by the World that they placed Īśvara in the realm of *māya*, since he is deemed responsible for the creation of the World and, consequently, involved in the cosmic drama. This leads either to practical dualism (between *para* and *apara* brahman, *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*, *paramarthika* and *vyavaharika*) or to an illusionistic conception of Īśvara. Both Īśvara and the individual soul (*jīva*) are nothing but superimpositions upon Brahman.¹⁹ Thus, says Vidyaraṇya, by being associated with its power (*śakti*), Brahman itself becomes (appears as) Īśvara.²⁰

Here we cannot take into consideration the theistic schools, in which Īśvara (albeit under different names and in different forms) obviously occupies the central position, because the situation is not the same. We could even enter into dialogue with one of these schools, such as the Vaiṣṇava Pañcaratra, Śaiva Siddhanta, or Kashmir Śaivism, which would certainly be easier, but since we have limited our subject to Vedantic theology, we shall proceed here to give a general analysis of the function of Īśvara in the Vedānta, without making explicit reference to any particular one of its historical forms.

Although Brahman is the absolute and only cause of the universe, there is still place for Īśvara for the following reasons.

1. Brahman is absolutely transcendent and, in a sense, beyond Being and non-Being. It is pure silence and utter nothingness, truly *ab-solutus*, without relation to anything. It can thus perform no external function, and it is where the figure of Īśvara appears. Of course, Brahman is often defined as pure Being, consciousness and bliss: *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. Yet this *sat* is pure static being without relations; *cit* is pure consciousness, but not consciousness of anything, not even of itself, and the *ānanda* of Brahman consists in the fullness of self-sufficiency. In other words, Brahman is devoid of relations, and it is therefore Īśvara who is in charge of them. Īśvara is existence, consciousness, and bliss in the relational sense. He is, properly speaking, the revelation of Brahman, the firstfruit, so to speak, of the unfathomable womb of Brahman. Īśvara is God.

2. Brahman cannot be a person, because if it were it would have relations with others (persons or things), which would compromise its absoluteness. Īśvara is the personal aspect of Brahman, in whatever manner he may be conceived.²¹

¹⁷ See G. Oberhammer, "Zum Problem des Gottesbeweises in der indischen Philosophie," *Numen* 12(1) (January 1965): pp. 1–34; G. Chemparathy, *An Indian Rational Theology*.

¹⁸ See above, Brahman. *Paramēśvara* has two forms, says Śāṅkara, one *nirguṇa* and another one *saguṇa*, which does not attain the former: "dvirūpe paramēśvare nirguṇaṃ rūpam anavāpya saguṇa evāvatiṣṭhanta" [in the two-formed supreme Īśvara, the *saguṇa* does not attain the *nirguṇa* form] (*BSBh* IV.4.19). See also P. Hacker, *Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śāṅkaras*, art. cit.

¹⁹ See *Pañcadāśī* III.37.

²⁰ *Pañcadāśī* III.40. The reaction of a prominent twentieth-century Vedantin is interesting: "Brahman and Īśvara have sometimes been called the higher and the lower god. The distinction is, to say the least, misleading, and probably the over-definite language of some of the systematising scholiasts is responsible for it. No doubt there is a distinction between the conceptions. Yet Īśvara is not in reality different from Brahman" (K. C. Bhattacharya, *Studies in Vedantism*, p. 34 [quoted from G. G. Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Upaniṣads*, p. 75]).

²¹ Any student of Indic philosophy will know the distinction in the *Brahma-Sūtra* between the impersonal—*apuruṣa-vidhā*—and the personal—*puruṣa-vidhā*—in the Godhead. See also *para-brahma* and *apara-brahma*. See R. Guéron 1941, p. 105, which identifies the supreme Brahman with Brahman

3. Brahman *as such* cannot be the creator of the World because of its absolute transcendence. Īśvara, therefore, is the "aspect" of Brahman that is responsible for the creation of the World.²²

4. Brahman cannot be held responsible even for the return of the World to its origin and its reality (which is Brahman itself). In other words, the *grace* of the Lord, the destruction of *māya*, and the fulfillment of Brahman are precisely the role and function of Īśvara. Īśvara is the Lord, the *guru*.

5. Brahman without attributes (*nirguṇa*) may be summed up with the following paradoxical formulations: Brahman is Brahman, but it does not know it is Brahman. Thus, in a certain sense, Brahman *is not*. Īśvara, on the other hand, is Brahman and knows he is Brahman. The souls of living beings, *jīvas*, are Brahman but do not yet know it. They will know it through the grace of the Lord (Īśvara), through their identification with him. The rest of the World, broadly speaking, is Brahman but does not know this identity, nor has it any possibility of knowing it, except through subsequent transmigrations of "things." There is no *real* change in the World (nothing that does not exist can come to be and nothing that *is* need become).²³ There is only a realization of what really *is*. Īśvara is the connecting link, the cause of this discovery, the God who acts and to whom creatures aspire in answer to his call.

6. Brahman is unchangeable and unmanifest, beyond all capacity for action, and therefore it is Īśvara who has to perform its functions in the care of the universe and souls. Even Īśvara is considered too aloof, and so Viṣṇu, when he needs to act in the World, manifests himself in the *avatāras*, appearing and descending to earth in the most diverse forms.²⁴

7. Lastly, Īśvara jealously preserves the transcendence and immanence of Brahman. Īśvara does everything *for* and *as* Brahman and, consequently, is both different from and identical to Brahman. If it were not so (if Brahman were not the ultimate reality), all the functions of Īśvara would be meaningless and totally unjustified.

The philosophical schools strive to resolve this antinomy and maintain this tension, even though they do not entirely succeed. At this point, therefore, we would like to give our own version of the *Sūtra*. We have here three statements:

1. There is Brahman, or God, or the Godhead, as Absolute, without relation, unchangeable, unique, simple.

2. There is the World with all the variety of its beings, with all the attributes that do not pertain to Brahman, changeability, manifestation, multiplicity, and so on.

3. There is a relation, "x," which is cause, mediator, or suchlike, between Brahman and the World. This relation, cause, or mediation, this "x," lies at the basis of the most profound dilemma: if there is no bond, the dualism that this implies destroys both the concept of Brahman and that of the World: of Brahman, for there would then exist a second (the World) ultimate equal to Brahman itself, and therefore Brahman would no longer be Brahman. The World would no longer be the relative World, but would be self-sufficient, founded on itself, and thus it would also become an Absolute. Paradoxically, this dualism would lead to the most monolithic monism. If there is no bond between Brahman and the World because they are both Absolutes, only one of them can exist—either the World, if we take this World as our

and the nonsupreme Brahman with Īśvara, even though Śāṅkara calls the former *Paramēśvara*. See the numerous texts and explanations in O. Lacombe 1937, pp. 217ff.

²² Again *kāraṇa-brahman* is distinct from pure Brahman and even from the immanent *ātman* (*kārya-brahman*) of the universe, which is *Hiranyagarbha*.

²³ See BG II.16, etc.

²⁴ See G. Parrinder 1970.

starting point (in which case we have no right to speak of "Brahman" at all), or Brahman, if we take the opposite approach (in which case there is no room for the "World"). Either way we would be prompted to make the audacious assertion that the Absolute is the relative and vice versa, with no distinction or qualification whatsoever (*nirvāṇa* is *samsara*). On the other hand, if there is a bond of an ontological nature, then we are dealing with monism, which also destroys both Brahman and the World. This bond would fetter Brahman to the World and make the World itself unchangeable, perfect, but it would also bind the World to Brahman, and so all the imperfections of the relative would become imperfections of the Absolute; they would become the Absolute itself.

The only dialectical solution would be to admit a kind of bond that does not demand a perfect communication between the two "terms." Diversely, their respective characteristics would have to be "reflected" in each other, and this "reflection" would obscure the very essence of what either Brahman or the World is supposed to be. What we are saying, therefore, is that this bond does not truly connect Brahman and the World, and this, in fact, is what Śāṅkara and Thomas, among others, have maintained. But even the Advaitic or Thomistic answer that this "bond" is "real" from one side only, and "unreal" from the other, does not entirely remove the obstacle.

It is precisely here, therefore, that we find Īśvara, and also one of the functions of Christ, in spite of all the differences there may be between the two. We might see this point of contact as the intersecting of two lines that run not parallelly but in opposite directions, forming a cross.²⁵

Christological Comment

I would like now to attempt a new interpretation of *Brahma-Sūtra* I.1.2 that will remain true to the meaning of the text itself without being alien to the Christian tradition. I will ask the reader, however, to read the following with an open, unbiased mind. We are, in fact, not dealing with crystallized concepts or complete systems of philosophy but with a living reality, which concepts are generally rather inadequate in expressing.

This inadequacy is on both sides. Although Trinitarian theology has been developed to a slightly greater extent, with regard to our question it nevertheless remains *in statu nascenti*, because the encounter with the religions of the world (from both sides) has not taken place. Again, our aim is not to bring Hinduism closer to Christianity, but to establish mutual relations between the two traditions to the extent that they may fecundate each other.

This, then, is the *bhāṣya* we are commenting on.

That from which all things proceed and to which all things return and by which all things are (sustained in their being) is God; however, two "instances" can be detected here. The "first" is the invisible origin from which the source springs; the "second" is, *primo et per se*, not a silent Godhead or an inaccessible Brahman, nor even God the Father, but the true Īśvara, God the Son, the *logos*, Christ.²⁶

²⁵ I would like to emphasize again that this study does not profess to offer a new solution, but only to describe the problem in the light of two different traditions. For a more detailed study of the problem itself, see other works by the author.

²⁶ Rather than developing this chapter into a complete *bhāṣya*, we shall merely propose a few texts from Scripture that may help to give an insight into the problem. For further references, the following works may prove useful: U. Lattanzi, *Il primato universale di Cristo secondo le S. Scritture* (Rome, 1937); J. Bonsirven, *L'Evangile de Paul* (Paris, 1948); Bonsirven, *La Règne de Dieu* (Paris, 1957); E. Walter, *Christus und der Kosmos* (Stuttgart, 1948); F. Mussner, *Christus, das All und die Kirche* (Trier, 1955); F.

That is God, the Absolute, not a Platonic demiurge or a secondary deity. It is the one source, the ultimate reality—yet it is distinct, for it is the expression,²⁷ the image,²⁸ the revealer of God.²⁹ We may say that it is a divine Person “begotten” by God,³⁰ equal to Him in nature³¹ but distinct in his subsistence and personality.³²

This Beginning and End of all things³³ has two “natures,” though not in the same way. It has two faces, two aspects, as it were.³⁴ One face is turned toward the Godhead and is its full expression and its bearer.³⁵ The other is turned outward to face the World and is the firstborn,³⁶ the sustainer,³⁷ the giver of being to the World.³⁸ Yet it is not two, but one: one principle, one person.³⁹

A further commentary, while remaining faithful to the text, will attempt to formulate a certain shade of meaning that was adumbrated, though not explicitly affirmed, by the famous *bhāṣyakaras*. This commentary will highlight two main points in the text, those regarding the meaning of (1) *that from which* and (2) the origin, etc.

1. *Yataḥ*, “from which,” is a fitting word for the supreme principle,⁴⁰ for two reasons. This “from which” the World derives is an authentic “whence,” not only in relation to the World but in itself also; it is, in other words, pure relation.⁴¹ It is by nature a “from which”; thus, in itself, it is an “originated,” a “begotten,” an expression, an image. The *logos* is the full Word, the total manifestation of God the Father. It is a true God from God, Light from Light,⁴² meaning that even its “face,” which mirrors the Godhead, is separate from its source, though without its total identity being thus diminished, because the *logos* receives the full divine “nature” that the Father possesses as the source of divinity.⁴³ It is, furthermore, *that* from which the World comes forth, the Alpha and the Omega, from which all things have

Prat, *La théologie de Saint Paul*, 8th ed. (Paris, 1923); O. Bauhofer, *Die Heimholung der Welt* (Freiburg, 1936); F. X. Durrwell, *La résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1954); E. Mersch, *La théologie du Corps mystique*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1949); J. Pinski, *Hoffnung auf Herrlichkeit* (Colmar, 1942); A. Frank-Duquesne, *Cosmos et Gloire. Dans quelle mesure l'univers a-t-il part à la chute, à la Rédemption et à la Gloire finale?* (Paris, 1947); A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*; Grillmeier, *Mit ihm und in ihm. Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven*.

²⁷ See Heb 1:3.

²⁸ See 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15, etc.

²⁹ See Jn 7:16; 12:45; 14:9.

³⁰ See Jn 1:14, 18; 3:18; 6:46.

³¹ See Jn 10:30; 17:11, 21–22; 2 Jn 5:7.

³² See Jn 1:1; 7:29; 17:5.

³³ See Rev 1:8; 2:8; 21:6; Col 1:17.

³⁴ See Phil 2:7; 2 Cor 8:9; Heb 2:14.

³⁵ See Jn 1:2; 2 Cor 4:4; Jn 6:57.

³⁶ See Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 1:5.

³⁷ See Col 1:17; 2:10.

³⁸ See Col 1:16; 1 Cor 8:6.

³⁹ See Jn 8:18, 21, 25, 58.

⁴⁰ See Jn 16:28.

⁴¹ See *BS* 1.4.27, where Brahman means the *yoni*, the matrix, the source.

⁴² See *Symbolum Epiphani* (Denz. 13); *Nicaeni* (Denz. 54), etc.

⁴³ Cf. the dogmatic expressions: “Christus est verus Deus, Verbum Patris, idemque Patris Filius, ipsi consubstantialis, ab ipso non separatus, genitus non factus, unigenitus, unus de trinitate” [Christ is true God, Word of the Father, likewise Son of the Father, one in substance with him, not separate from him, begotten not created, only-begotten, one from trinity] in any Christian theology.

their being and for which the World subsists. Although this tradition has not mixed the two "orders," with their respective movements *ad extra* and *ab intra*, "creative" and "intratrinitarian," it has maintained that, despite their different natures, they proceed from one and the same ultimate Act.⁴⁴

The Vedantic intuition that Brahman is transcendent, absolute, unrelated to the World and, at the same time, cause of the World and Lord in *Īśvara* is more than a mere rational hypothesis or an expedient to save the two poles of the problem. It appears, in fact, to be based on an authentic theological inspiration conveyed by the *ṛṣi* and conserved in the *śruti*.

Here we have a case that demonstrates the mutual fecundation of religious traditions to which I alluded in the previous chapter. We have seen that the discussion regarding the relation between *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* Brahman cannot resist the temptation of falling into either dualism or monism. If *saguṇa* Brahman is of this World, then the distance is insurmountable and, consequently, the two orders are irreducible; thus we fall into dualism. If Brahman is identical with *nirguṇa*, then the distance disappears and the two orders are unified, causing us to fall into monism. Similarly, if God is the Creator and the creation is real, there is mutual interdependence and dualism appears. If the process is merely an intra-divine adventure, then the creation has no consistency of its own and monism becomes inevitable.

Keeping in mind both the Indic questions and the Christian tradition, I will now attempt to formulate this tension, using as points of reference the two main Advaitic schools.

The *Īśvara* of the Śaṅkara school is, in fact, oriented almost completely toward the phenomenal order. He may still be called God, but is no longer identifiable with the Absolute, with Brahman.⁴⁵ This *Īśvara* is essentially *saguṇa*, and yet, in some way, also claims to be *nirguṇa*. The difference between Brahman and *Īśvara* is overemphasized in order to safeguard the absolute purity of Brahman.

The *Īśvara* of our interpretation does not belong exclusively to the world of *māya*. He is not only a creature but is also equal to Brahman, though distinctly different both in his form of existence and his function in relation to the World. Our *Sūtra*, in fact, refers us to Brahman and not to an *Īśvara* under the banner of *māya*; otherwise the dualism would subsist and the problem would remain unsolved. *Īśvara*, then, is not merely *saguṇa* Brahman, or an emanation of it, nor a mere "modality" of the Godhead. The *Sūtra*, in fact, seems to indicate a way toward what the Christian tradition calls the Son who is fully God. It points to an *Īśvara* who, though being *saguṇa*, has not ceased to be *nirguṇa*. Perhaps this was the thought of Badarayana when he refused to give up the reality either of the World or of Brahman, though it was clear that they were not the same thing.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the *Īśvara* of Ramanuja, while endeavoring to overcome the same tension, tends to fall, so to speak, on the opposite side of the fence. He is Brahman, and his creation is the Body of the Absolute; there is no dividing line between him and the World. Together they form a whole, which is the one complete Brahman.⁴⁷ This sameness

⁴⁴ Cf. "Deus enim cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. . . . Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum eius est expressivum creaturarum" [For God, in knowing himself, knows everything that is created. . . . And because God knows himself and knows all things in a single act of cognition, his unique Word is an expressing that embraces all things created] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* I, q.34, a.3).

⁴⁵ See R. P. Singh, *The Vedānta of Śaṅkara* (Baroda, 1949), against old commentators such as Sureśvara and Padmapāda and recent ones such as S. N. Dasgupta and S. Radhakrishnan.

⁴⁶ See *BS* I.1.21; I.2.8ff., etc.

⁴⁷ This idea of Man as *Īśvarasyāṁśa*, part of *Īśvara* (cf. *Sribhāṣya* II.1.15) may be interpreted as

is emphasized here so that Īśvara may save the reality of the World, or at least that of the *jīvas*, the souls.

The Īśvara of our interpretation does not belong only to the world of the Godhead. He is not just a mere aspect of the divine, but is indeed "human" or, rather, worldly, without ceasing to be divine. Our *Sūtra* points toward a reality that not only connects the two poles but "is" the two poles, without allowing them to coincide.

In Christian language we could say that the Īśvara of our interpretation points toward the Mystery of Christ, who, being unique in his existence and essence, is therefore equal to God.⁴⁸ He is not God *himself*, but *equal* to him, Son of God, God from God. He has, moreover, a twofold "nature," but these two natures are "without confusion, without change," yet also "without division, without separation."⁴⁹ He is more than a mediator, and in a certain sense is like the "whole Christ," the total Christ, the entire reality of the World, inasmuch as he is *real*, or, in other words, inasmuch as he is (or shall be, to speak in terms of time) incorporated in the World and one with the same, forming one Mystical Body. Thus He, Christ (Īśvara), is (or shall be) one with the authentic World and one with God the Father, so that God may be all in all and nothing shall remain beyond or beside Him.⁵⁰

This is not the place to go over in detail all the functions of Īśvara as we have interpreted him. Our intention here has been simply to show how this interpretation responds to the needs of the text and adds to the questions of Indic speculation. Our Īśvara, however, remains mysterious and paradoxical. It requires "faith"—intended not as blind credulity but as a superior form of knowledge—to accept him, precisely because he is a living God and not merely an abstract mental hypothesis. Another way of saying this is that in order to realize this "knowledge" the Advaitic experience is needed. Mere discursive reason alone, in fact, is unable to support the two poles of the dilemma without falling into contradiction.⁵¹

2. *Janmādi*, "the origin, etc.": the Indian mind's thirst for eternity has sometimes caused commentators to overlook the double sense of the "production etc." of Īśvara. There is in fact a production and a conservation of the World as such that happens in a nontemporal, or "eternal" way; and there is also the development or evolution of all these acts, happening concurrently with the temporal development of things. The Īśvara of our commentary fulfills both these functions: he is that from which being *is* in an "eternal" way; and he is that toward which being tends or be-comes, within the temporal process. This double function of Īśvara, namely that of keeping the World in being "in time" and "out of time," is ultimately one, for there are not two worlds, one in eternity and another in time. It is precisely in order to avoid such a dichotomy that I have introduced the concept of *tempiternity*,⁵² which attempts to express the nondualistic intuition of what is otherwise seen as the double "dimension" of time and eternity. The process is thus tempiternal. In order to make explicit this function of Īśvara, it will be well, however, to describe its two "moments."

an introduction to the problem of participation.

⁴⁸ See *MandU* 6, a text that needs a commentary of its own regarding this particular problem.

⁴⁹ See the four famous adverbs of the Council of Chalcedon (Denz. 148).

⁵⁰ See 1 Cor 12:12; 15:28; Col 3:11; Gal 3:28; Rom 12:5; Eph 1:23.

⁵¹ This is the crux of a great part of neo-Vedānta thought, which seeks to solve the conflicting statements of the texts through dialectics, whereas these statements are only meaningful in the light of a sapiential intuition.

⁵² See R. Panikkar, "El presente tempiterno. Una apostilla a la historia de la salvación y a la teología de la liberación," in *Teología y mundo contemporáneo* (Homenaje a Karl Rahner), ed. A. Vargas-Machuca (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 1975), pp. 133–75; and R. Panikkar, "La tempiternidad," in *Sanctum-Sacrificium*, V Congreso Eucarístico Nacional (Zaragoza, 1961), pp. 75–93.

a. To imagine the nontemporal origin, production, preservation, and destruction of the World, we may consider it as being already accomplished, as if every being had reached the end of time, and then suppress the temporal factor. But this is only an image, and we have to transcend imagination and even discursive thinking if we want a glimpse into the "tempiternal" reality, which is more than mere nontemporality. In such a perspective, there is nothing but God, a God that as the absolute "I" has an eternal "Thou," which is equal to him and which is nevertheless not a second, but always a Thou. This Thou, which is the Son, is the whole Christ, including the new heavens and the new earth: all beings participate in this Christ, find their place in him and are fully what they are when they become one with him, the Son. All that exists, that is, the whole of reality, is nothing but God: Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. All that exists is nothing but Brahman as *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*, as being, consciousness, and bliss—that is, *sat* as the very support of all that in one way or another constitutes "being"; *cit* as the spiritual or intellectual link that encompasses and penetrates the total reality; and *ānanda* as the perfect fullness that receives into itself and inspires all that is tending toward it. There are not two Brahman: *nirguṇa* Brahman "is" *saṃguṇa*, precisely when it *is*, in the same way that *śabda-brahman* is *parabrahman*, precisely when it is *said*.

b. *In time*—that is, in the temporal development of all beings that here on earth are pilgrim beings, things in the making, itinerant creatures, *Īśvara* is also that from which they come forth, to which they return and by which they are sustained. The growth of all things in time is nothing but a fuller realization of their being in *Īśvara*, says the Vedānta, and in Christ, as our *bhāṣya* discloses.⁵³ Whatever degree of reality this World may have, it is produced, sustained, and attracted by this divine and human mediator, indicated in the Brahma Sūtra.

Trinitas reducit dualitatem ad unitatem (the Trinity reduces dualism to unity), says St. Augustine, who describes the final state of the World with the words, "et erit unus Christus amans seipsum": there will be only one Christ loving himself⁵⁴—not selfishly, needless to say, but because the divinity in its fullness dwells bodily in him.⁵⁵ In him all things are summed up and the Spirit will quicken them with that life that flows out of the Father alone.⁵⁶

To develop these ideas further by giving them an exhaustive treatment would require a full commentary (*bhāṣya*). Ultimately, we have but one comment to make: *that from which this World comes forth and to which it returns and by which it is sustained, that is Īśvara, the Christ.*⁵⁷

⁵³ See Eph 1:10; 4:2–13.

⁵⁴ *In Epist. ad Parthos* (PL 35.2055). We have to refrain here from adducing parallel conceptions, e.g., in Śaiva theology (the basic conception being that only Śiva can worship Śiva).

⁵⁵ See Col 2:9.

⁵⁶ See 1 Cor 12:6; Eph 1:11; 4:46.

⁵⁷ See Jn 12:32.

EPILOGUE

I am aware that these last pages especially may seem excessively weighty and baroque, but they reflect the spirit of Indic Scholasticism. I have chosen to keep the original text because in it I avoided developing my own interpretation of Christ as fully divinized Man. But let us return to our theme.

The underlying theme of our discussion has been that which regards the *sensus plenior*, the fuller meaning, of many of Mankind's philosophical and religious texts.¹ This *sensus* is more evident in oral traditions, which are so often overlooked. The most faithful is the oral transmission from master to disciple, because it is not only the intellectual content that is transmitted but also the spiritual content. In our context, we are not claiming that everything is fulfilled in historical Christianity or placing the Hindū tradition on the same plane as that of the Old Testament; as we have said, the relationship is two-way and mutually fecundating. Every tradition is *sui generis* and needs an adequate methodology to be interpreted. In monotheistic terms we might say that God provides for all his children and guides them toward the new heavens and the new earth through the various traditions of Mankind. What we call the Bible (a name which, right up to modern times, was attributed exclusively to the Old Testament) has an undeniable *historical* connection with the message of Christ. Faith, however, does not come from reading alone, but from *ex auditu*,² that is, from the experience of that which is perceived not only with the ear, but also with the heart (though, of course, faith cannot be reduced to a mere sentiment). What is felt is felt through the word of Christ.³

We cannot deny that during the first two millenniums Christianity was considered a historical religion, perhaps because it was generally believed that the word became alive in history. Christianity is not the religion of the Book, but of the Word.

It is up to the religions of the East to free the message of Christ from the straitjacket that forces it to be revealed *only* through a historical religion. God cannot be confined to an exclusively historical role, nor can the Incarnation be reduced to a temporal phenomenon. Here, however, let us just say that we must be careful not to reject a religious text or tradition (an attitude that has often proved fatal) simply because it does not agree with our crystallized ideas or formulations. Only when we have arrived at the *res significata*, the ineffable reality, do we have the right to make a criticism, because only then can we arrive at a more complete understanding that contains new and old (*nova et vetera*) elements that are free from all that is superfluous. To keep a tradition shut up within itself is to suffocate it.

It may be appropriate here to qualify the traditional expression of the *sensus plenior*, the ever fuller meaning of sacred texts as the truly living word. The reader also belongs to the text, and when the reader changes, or approaches it from another perspective, the text may

¹ If our view is correct, it may throw some light on the delicate theological problem of "implicit faith," as it provides the implicit object of this faith and shows its development—which means that what we have said applies not only to Christianity but to all religions, without any exception.

² Rom 10:17.

³ Ibid.

give a different meaning.⁴ A text may progressively have a *sensus plenior*.⁵ The theory of the *sensus plenior* postulates an unfolding of both human consciousness and divine revelation. This awareness corresponds not to relativism but to relativity, as I have attempted many times to explain. On the other hand, the meaning of a text, and that of any human discourse, is rooted in our interpretation, as questionable as it may be.⁶ The meaning we find in our *Sūtra*, therefore, does not nullify the differences between the two traditions, but offers a point of encounter and a possibility of mutual fecundation.

We have accepted the risk of speaking continuously of Christ, and have tried to avoid both being misunderstood and raising a controversy regarding the use of the name. We might have used the terms *logos* or the *Word*, *śabda* or *vāc* or others, including *Lord*, which would perhaps be the most culturally neutral term. Yet if we have chosen to use the word "Christ" it is not due to a form of "Christian imperialism" or any similar intention, but for the reason explained in the Introduction: that Christ is the name Christians use to express this reality, and my aim has been to extend the horizons of a tradition with which I identify. My use of the name Christ does not imply any monopoly on the name or any form of exclusivism.

As I have said many times, while Jesus is an individual, the name of Christ is real, but not personal. Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are Christians, yet the phrase does not express an abstract logical identity. Though Jesus is the Christ, the Christ is not fulfilled in Jesus. In the Eucharist there is the real presence of Christ, but it is not in the form of the protein of Jesus.

It is obvious that neither the author of the *Brahma-Sūtra* nor its commentators were ever able to think explicitly about Jesus Christ. Each of them had in mind the object of his own devotion, his own idea of divinity (*iṣṭa-devata*). It is also an indisputable fact that the living Jesus Christ of the Christian faith cannot be considered identical to the Īśvara of the Vedānta, and vice versa. Christian theology has always sought, especially in the last few centuries (in the patristic period things were different), to accentuate the differences between Christianity and "non-Christian" religions and to emphasize the newness of the Christian phenomenon, both as revelation and as a "new ontological creation."⁷ As I have pointed out, this attitude is based on the fact that the Christian distinction was considered a mark of its *identity*. I cannot help but suspect that if the Christians had presented the true *identity* of Christ rather than emphasizing his *identification*, the course of history would have been different. Philosophy is not a form of wisdom detached from Life. Without underrating all these aspects, however, let us venture a couple of affirmations that are complementary to our theme.

First, in the realm of philosophy: the role of Īśvara in the Vedānta corresponds as a homeomorphic function to the role of Christ in Christian thought. It is precisely this correspondence that provides a *locus* for Christ in Indic philosophy and for Īśvara in Christian theology. However, if our starting point is the historicity of Christ (however important it may be), we run the risk of being gravely misunderstood, not only because for the past two thousand years the Christian concept of history has remained somewhat alien to the Indic mind, but also because such a concept is in fact a posteriori to the Incarnation of Christ, which

⁴ See R. Panikkar, "The Texture of a Text: In Response to Paul Ricoeur," *Point of Contact* (New York) 2(1) (April–May 1978): pp. 51–64.

⁵ See G. Marchiano 1977; A. Borst 1957.

⁶ As I have expressed elsewhere with the play of words "Truth *lies* in the interpretation."

⁷ See the classic study by K. Prümmer, *Christentum als Neuheitserlebnis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1939). There is a newer edition titled *Abendländische Kirchenfreiheit* (Einsiedeln-Köln: Benziger, 1943), and also a new text, *Kirche und Staat im frühen Christentum* (Munich: Kösel, 1961).

is not an *exclusively* historical phenomenon. For a large part of human thought, in fact, the reality of Christ is not identical to his historicity. We should not forget, moreover, that the first philosophical interpretation of Christ begins by speaking not about the "flesh" but about the *logos* that became "flesh." Perhaps (and I use the word parenthetically) the attraction to gnosticism in the first centuries of Christianity was *also* the result of a certain visceral and Eastern reaction to an exclusively historical vision of the phenomenon (the Incarnation) to which universal transcendence (which cannot be vehiculated by history *alone*) was attributed. Nonetheless, a great many philosophical misunderstandings, on the part of Indic philosophy, regarding Christ and the Incarnation would be dispelled if Christian theology made more of an effort to speak of Christ in a way that makes sense to the listener.⁸

Second, using a certain theological language, one could speak of a historical action of divine providence that inspires Mankind in different ways according to the time and place, and directs human life, with all its components (including philosophical and religious), toward fullness and Man and his ideas toward the ultimate end of history. No one can claim to know the "hour" of God, the concrete design of providence in the undetermined events of our human struggle on earth, yet no one can rightly object to the peaceful expression of a conviction.⁹ Such a conviction claims that Christ has always been at work everywhere—that he was present not only when God created all things, setting the heavens and commanding the waters, but also when the Indic *ṛṣi* composed and handed down the *śruti*—for God's wisdom (*sophia*, *śakti*) "was daily his delight, rejoicing in the earth, for its delights were with the children of Men." In this context, however, philosophy must be silent, and theology confess its own inadequacy.¹⁰

With regard to this, in order to avoid misunderstanding I shall cite two authorities. Whatever merit this work may have, in fact, it can take no credit for novelty. Many other valid references could be added, but here these two must suffice.

Mutatis mutandis, we have attempted to do what the Christian Scholastics, especially Thomas Aquinas, did with Greek wisdom in general and Aristotle in particular. It would not be difficult to prove that I have treated our text more literally than Thomas Aquinas did with Aristotle.¹¹ The Aristotelian God could not have been a Father who loves his children. Moreover, Aristotle's conception of time was incompatible with the exigencies of the Christian incarnation as understood by St. Thomas and his era. We refer here to fundamental philosophical concepts, which, nevertheless, did not prevent St. Thomas from using—and transforming—Aristotle, and commenting on "the Philosopher" *pro domo sua*.

Needless to say, St. Thomas's method was perfectly legitimate. He did not simply perform the academic task of an interpreter but undertook a theological mission of assimilating and explaining (Christian) truths, using the Aristotelian framework, conveniently transformed. He was not concerned with aseptic "scientific" hermeneutics, but sought only the truth.¹²

⁸ See R. Panikkar, "La demitologizzazione nell'incontro del cristianesimo con l'induismo," in *Archivio di Filosofia* (Padua: CEDAM, 1961), pp. 243–66.

⁹ See Prov 8:22ff.

¹⁰ See 1 Cor 13:1–3.

¹¹ "One should not forget that even the elementary notions of physical substance, of matter and of form, above all of potency and act have not the same sense in Aristotle and in Thomas Aquinas, because his own notion of being is other than that of Aristotle" (E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1955], p. 709).

¹² "Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum" [The study of philosophy is not concerned with what men think, but with the truth of things], says Thomas, commenting on Aristotle himself, in *De Coelo* 1.22.

Furthermore, St. Thomas followed the traditional Christian line of all ages, founded on the conviction that the Christian seeks fullness of truth and that the Christianization of certain values (such as those of Aristotelian philosophy) does them no harm at all, but rather clarifies them, making them shine in a light that is more comprehensible to his contemporaries. He believed he was saying in his time what Aristotle might have said, perhaps not psychologically, but ontologically, insofar as Aristotle tried to explain certain truths that are beyond words.¹³

We have said the above *mutatis mutandis* for various reasons. First of all, because it is a two-way argument; that is, from Christianity to Hinduism and vice versa, even though, for reasons I have tried to explain elsewhere, the latter side I have not developed. The second reason is obviously not in my favor; I would not dare, in fact, to compare my attempt at rethinking a "non-Christian" philosophy with that of the Angelic Doctor. Where person, contents of thought, and method are concerned, I do not presume to emulate even distantly the great Scholastic theologian. Yet there is another reason, which may be to my advantage. Seven centuries of human experience have made us aware of what St. Thomas achieved—even though it is clear that not everything he said is acceptable today. Nowadays our perspective is different, and we have new knowledge and new tools. It is possible, certainly, that St. Thomas believed his work was reviving Aristotle (though there are several very concrete signs that lead us to doubt it). On the other hand, the exegetical, dialectical, and philosophical contexts could not have been as important to Thomas as they are to us today. Our interpretation involves a critical understanding of the Christian dynamism of "gathering together all things in Christ."¹⁴ Today we are critically aware that the Christian *a priori* of Christ as Mediator is embedded in time, space, culture, and a particular human understanding.¹⁵ Furthermore, philosophical and theological consciousness no longer accepts the method of the *spolia aegyptiorum*, the alleged right and duty of Christians to consider the earth and all human cultural values as being assigned perpetually to their care by the Creator. Christian reflection today must reconsider its starting point and, at the least, justify it in the human arena.

I would like to reiterate once again that, in my opinion, the "discovery" of a Śaṅkara or a Rāmānuja is just as important in Christian theology today as the assimilation of Plato and Aristotle was in the past. I would venture to say, moreover, that the discovery of the Christian tradition is also important in the enrichment of Hinduism.¹⁶

Minutis minuendis, I venture to suggest that this work might find its inspiration, illumination, and justification in the famous encounter of St. Paul with the men of Athens.¹⁷ In Athens there was an altar dedicated to the Unknown God, and Paul told the people he would declare to them that very God whom they, without knowing it, were worshipping.¹⁸

This text also lends itself to an interpretation that is more closely related to our subject. Paul acknowledges the possibility of worshipping an unknown God and that it is him (τούτο) and none other which he declares. In a certain sense, worship of God is always the worship of a Mystery glimpsed and believed, but not known. This consciousness of that which is unknown and the awareness of the fact is a phenomenological characteristic of the act of

¹³ "Sub verbis latent significata verborum" [under words lies hidden their meaning]—this is something that St. Thomas never forgot. See *Sum. theol.* II-II, q.8, a.1.

¹⁴ Eph 1:10.

¹⁵ As we have said, the Mediator (not the intermediary) is Christ, not a single individual like Jesus, though the two cannot be separated.

¹⁶ I might cite as examples the movement of the Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth century and, more recently, the writings of S. Radhakrishnan.

¹⁷ See Acts 17:16–34.

¹⁸ Acts 17:23: ὁ οὖν αγνοούμενος εὐσεβεῖτε τούτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.

worship. Perhaps Christians do not know Kṛṣṇa who, as the *Gītā* tells us, is the one to whom all acts of worship are directed. Vice versa, Hindūs may worship Christ without knowing. True worshippers of the divine do so in spirit and in truth.¹⁹

It was certainly not a mere zealous "strategy" that led Paul to speak these memorable words and adopt such an attitude. In revealing the face of God he was not proclaiming *another* God, in fact, and he added that God was not far from any of his listeners because "in him we live and move and are,"²⁰ substantiating his bold claim with a quotation from a Greek poet: "For we are also his offspring."²¹ This brings to mind the verse of the great cosmological hymn of the *Rig Veda*: "What God shall we adore with our oblation?"²² One of the possible meanings of the text is the mysterious character of the Godhead, which can never be fully grasped and to which we can only approach with an open question. That which on the Areopagus was a dedication in the dative is here a question in the dative: God is the "to whom?" of our inquiry.

In other words, God is at work in all religions. The Christian kerygma does not proclaim a new God, but the *mirabilia* of God,²³ the hidden God, of which Christ is the alpha and omega.²⁴ This very expression, in fact, declares that Christ is not yet "finished," and will not be "revealed" until the "last moment," at the "end," as at Emmaus.²⁵ The whole process is still moving toward completion.

Based on the episode at Athens we believe we may speak not only of the unknown God of the Greeks, but also of the *hidden Christ of Hinduism*—hidden and unknown and yet present and at work because "He is not far from any one of us." St. Paul had to fight on two opposite fronts in order to defend the Christian position. On the one hand were the Jews who, even when converted, tended to make Christianity into a reformed sect of Judaism; on the other hand were the Greeks, who were inclined to assimilate Christianity into a kind of gnosis or a variety of Greek wisdom. In both cases the struggle was against the attempt to minimize the figure of Christ and interpret it separately from the central mystery of the Trinity. Paul's reaction was to show how in Christ the mystery of the incarnate God, the God-Man (as Radhakrishnan writes²⁶) has been revealed, and how the Cosmic Redeemer, the Beginning and End of all things, the Only Begotten, the *logos* is, at the same time, Jesus, son of Mary, crucified by men and risen from the dead so that he may gather unto him the whole of creation and lead it back to God the Father, bringing together all the scattered pieces of wandering humanity, which yet remains full of expectation, awaiting the manifestation of the children of God.²⁷

Finally, let us formulate a theological conclusion that automatically follows this christological approach: the unity of Christ. Whatever God does *ad extra* is done through Christ. To recognize the presence of *God* in other religions is to proclaim the presence of Christ in

¹⁹ Jn 4:23–24.

²⁰ Acts 17:28.

²¹ An analysis of this *γένος* used by Aratus (*Phenomenes* 5) and repeated and accepted by St. Paul should prove useful and enlightening.

²² RV X.121. See R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, pp. 67–72.

²³ This is a theme that appears throughout the Scripture; cf. Ps 9:2; 25:7; 39:6; 70:17; 74:2; 97:1, etc.; Eccles 42:17, etc.

²⁴ Cf. Eph 3:9; Rom 16:25, etc.

²⁵ Lk 24:32.

²⁶ See, for example, S. Radhakrishnan 1960, p. 103: "The rational man has grown to the spiritual man, to the God-man."

²⁷ See Rom 8:19.

them, "for by him all things consist."²⁸ Again, we emphasize the unity of Christ to counter-balance modern-day individualistic thought. There are not many Christs, just as there are not many Gods.²⁹

I would like here to make one last observation that sums up the whole spirit of this book. We have spoken about Hindū religion and Christian religion, and we have used the name of God that is common to both religions, though with very different connotations. In a different context, Buddhist or secular, we might have spoken about Man fulfilled as the "homeomorphic equivalent" of God. Perhaps to modern sensitivity it is more universal to speak of Man than of God. The only difference lies in considering Man as more than a "rational animal"; he is a mysterious living being, hungry for the infinite and open to the Mystery. In some languages he is called "divine," in others "fulfilled," "illuminated," and so on.

It is still significant that to a part of the Western population the name of God and that of religion also have a more or less sectarian coloring (including in a nonpejorative sense, i.e., simply nonuniversal, noncatholic). Another example is the use of the word "secular" as meaning tolerant and open to all doctrines with which a religion is identified, almost as if religions were essentially intolerant and absolutized their own beliefs. Today the word "dogmatism" has almost become synonymous with "fundamentalism." It is clear that after thirty or forty centuries of a history marked by the bad example of institutionalized religions, the secular world has become allergic to a certain type of language.

In short, this book aims to be a concrete example of the possibility of finding the infinite dimension in this being that we all are, without having to renounce our history and thereby separate ourselves from all those who have gone before us.

* * *

I have refrained from altering the original text that was written half a century ago, not out of any conservative instinct, but because I consider it as a possible stepping-stone toward a new way of conceiving both religions and Christ himself.

I do not profess to imitate St. Augustine in his *Retractationes*, but I would like to try to recover the more traditional intuition of Christianity that existed before the temporal power of the Christian church moved faith in the Trinity into the shadows. The Trinity, in fact, is not only more ecumenical and closer to Hinduism, but it also provides a solution to a great many of modern Man's problems.³⁰ Put simply, the divine Mystery belongs to a reality that is shared also by humans and the World—a Reality that I have called cosmotheandric.³¹

This sense of catholicity, that is, universality, is without doubt a breath of the Spirit.³² The danger, as with the Trinity, is confusion on one hand and unification on the other.

Summing up once more, the Unknown Christ of Hinduism is that Mystery that is present but remains unknown in Reality while we wander through this life.

²⁸ Col 1:17.

²⁹ The theory of "enotheism" is the (almost pathetic) example put forward by Indology in the last century to defend monotheism without having to accept a multiplicity of Gods.

³⁰ See R. Panikkar 1989/XXIII.

³¹ See R. Panikkar 2004/LII.

³² We do not deny the distinction, yet we cannot and must not ignore a certain methodological discipline—even though everything is related, *sarvam sarvātmakam*.

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SECTION II

A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Part One

THE INTEGRATION OF INDIC PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT INTO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY*

Quoniam in ipso condita sunt universa

Col 1:15

* From *The Clergy Monthly Supplement*, May 1958, pp. 64–68.

1

THE PROBLEM

Our question does not belong to apologetics but to theology. Apologetics here would deal with the problem of how to introduce and make acceptable the Christian ideas in the non-Christian world. Our problem is the opposite one: how, and how far, can Indic philosophy help us understand and express the Christian dogma?

It is a traditional view that philosophy is *ancilla theologiae*; therefore, the question at issue here is whether Indic philosophy may have such an ancillary function. It goes without saying that *ancilla* does not mean slave, and that we must grant Indic philosophy the full development of its service—and for that, philosophical freedom is required. Short of this freedom, it would be neither *ancilla* nor *philosophia*.

Indic philosophy and religious thought will thus be “integrable” into Christian theology if they prove to be a good instrument for expressing and understanding the Christian dogma. This very fact of being utilized as an instrument will help toward the transformation or rather *conversion* of Hinduism itself.

THE IDEA OF INTEGRATION

Integration represents more than mere adaptation. It also goes a step further than sincere adoption. Adoption means to take as "our own" something that naturally does not belong to us. It is predominantly a juridical concept. We may have full right to adopt the Indic culture, but if we do not go beyond that, it will remain an adopted child of parents who are strangers. And there is the risk that the true parents might claim their child back. Even if the parents were dead (they are not, in this case), the future generations living on merely adapted, or simply adopted, concepts will hardly be able to draw from them the full Christian life required for an autochthonous and authentic growth. Adaptation may perhaps be a necessary or previous step, and adoption a useful tentative, but they can go little beyond the stage of expressing our own ideas in a foreign language.

Integration implies, to begin with, that we speak the proper language and think in the same language we speak. This problem of language is more than a mere metaphor. To know the language of Indic philosophy is today an imperative duty for Christian theology since it claims to be the intellectual exposition of a truth that affirms itself as universal, "catholic."

Now, there are two ways of learning a language. One belongs to adults and foreigners; the other to children and natives. The first way proceeds by comparing "words" with "words," that is, in our case, concepts with concepts; and when it is a little more advanced, idioms with idioms or, say, systems with systems. The person who thinks in one language—in one culture, one philosophy—and speaks in another, however great his technique and mastery might be, will always remain a stranger in the second language, in the second culture and philosophy.

The other way of learning a language is typical of children—to whom, incidentally, belong the kingdom of God. It does not proceed by way of comparing words with words, but of discovering relations between words and *things*. We cannot understand the Indic culture if we do not attend—or have not attended—its "school," like little children, trying to learn both things and their meanings. "What is this?" asks a child while showing a particular object with his finger. Only if we succeed in pointing out, with our intellect (in its intuitive function: *intellectus*) the very "things" of which concepts and words are already translations, will we be able to understand the answers given by the various philosophies and proceed to a possible integration.

Integration means to *really* take in some principles, or ideas, or attitudes, without making room for them just in a previous scheme, but *converting* them (for this is a real conversion) into an integral part of Christian life, tradition, and doctrine. In order to integrate we must, in fact, assimilate what we take in and make it our own, so that the differences between new and old elements become at least irrelevant.

Integration, consumption, assimilation, and the like are all metaphors that have to be understood in the right way, without forcing them to say more than what they meant to.

This occurs especially with any expression of the Christian truth, as Christianity is a singular reality both from an essential and from an existential viewpoint, and therefore irreducible to any other existing category. The above-mentioned example of language shows that integration already belongs to the essential order. In the existential sphere, words like explication and organic growth are more apt to express the other side of the process.

Indeed, Christianity as *Pleroma Christi* (the fullness of Christ) does not integrate anything because everything that *is* is already integrated in Christ, some way or another. We integrate ideas, attitudes, principles, but we only explicate the Christian reality, develop it, make it grow. Integration is not a growth through juxtaposition, nor an addition of altogether new, that is, foreign and disjointed elements, but an organic enrichment, a new synthesis, a recovery or discovery (or *redemption*) of fragments of truth (which therefore are Christian by definition, if Christianity is the *whole* truth) which are "incorporated" in this growing of the Mystical Body.

THE CONDITIONS FOR INTEGRATION

The Understanding of Christian Theology

Obviously, no integration is possible if we minimize or narrow the nature and extent of Christian theology.

Theology is not a kind of supernatural metaphysics, nor a rational science, nor a private affair of the individual, nor a ready-made and closed set of doctrines. If we still persist in calling it a science, although—meanwhile—the meaning of the word has shifted, we should not forget that it is a *scientia subalternata*, a participation in the divine knowledge (*scientia*) by which God knows Himself and in Himself the whole universe.

Theology, or *theologia viae* as St. Thomas calls it, is (also according to him) the *normal* expansion of faith, the *fides quaerens intellectum*, searching for the understanding, the total intellection of the reality given us in and through faith. It is the *intellectus fidei* or, as its very name shows, "theo-logy," that is, *λογος του θεου*. It is the *logos*, the word of God, in both the objective and the subjective sense: the word of God speaking to Men, and Men's words on God when they try to understand and follow His message, His word, that is, to put it into practice.

This living theology, this theology on pilgrimage, is a constant companion of Man in his pilgrimage on earth, helping him to decipher the meaning and to adore the reality of the living Word of God, who came down and dwelt among us. It is the dialogue that the believer (and this implies: *in the Church*) constantly carries on with God in his inner *contemplation*, and with the other people and the world surrounding him in his Christian *action*. A theology deaf to the environment where it has to live would soon become dumb for that very milieu. *Verbum Dei non est alligatum*, says St. Paul,¹ or rather, as the Greek text seems to suggest more clearly, God's *logos*, "theo-logy," is not and cannot be tied up to any particular class, world, and culture. An isolated and chemically pure theology, afraid of contamination—as the Jews who asked for Christ's crucifixion refused to enter the palace of a "gentile" like Pilate—would, to say the least, remain barren and ineffective.

A Theological Understanding of Indic Philosophy

Christian theology in India today has to take Hinduism, as well as any other religion, as the subject matter of its study, for a double reason: the possible presence of the Word of God in it, and the undeniable presence—in it—of the words of Men about God. This double "Word of God," wherever it may be found, belongs to Catholic theology, to which that injunction of Christ could be applied: *Colligite quae superaverunt fragmenta*:² an attempt to

¹ 2 Tim 2:9.

² Jn 6:12.

integrate all those fragments, to pick up all those broken pieces that have fallen from heaven to earth since Man began to live, that is, to love, to think, to sin, in this land of India—for God exerts a universal providence on all of His children.

By this, we do not only mean that Indic philosophy is a sort of pre-Christian theology (*sed non est de nominibus disputandum*), but also that Catholic research should always approach it within a strictly theological horizon, and not only a philosophical one, as is so often the case.

In this theological perspective, Indic philosophy does not appear as a *mere* intellectual set of ideas—to be discussed and criticized—but as an existential reality that has, on the one hand, shaped the mind and hence the culture of the people of India, and, on the other hand, whose *function* has been to lead the people of India to know, to love, and to attain the only true reality of those things that transcend all understanding.

We could here speak of God's cosmic alliance with the children of Adam and YHWH's Testament toward His chosen people, while introducing the notions of original revelation and "historical"—not "natural"—religions. But it is not necessary to put forward complex doctrines in order to ground the religious values we are dealing with.

It is a fact that the spiritual and intellectual nourishment for the people of this vast continent for millennia has been Hindū wisdom. Now, insofar as they have lived a good life, insofar as they have been saved and reached salvation, they have done so, ultimately, in and through Christ, the only Mediator, but directly or immediately by the means provided by Indic culture and religion. Indic spirituality, in its genuine values, has been the *quasi*-instrument of salvation; in other words, the grace of God, of Christ (since there is no heaven without grace), coming from Christ has been wrapped and embodied in Hindū values. *Practically* and *for a time*, Hinduism and Indic philosophy have taken the place, have been the forerunners and even, in a *certain* sense, the substitutes of Christianity and Christian theology.

The possibility of integration is closely related to the discovery of this existential character of Indic philosophy. Its ideas might not be "orthodox," but the existential bearing of those ideas may well tend toward the Christian Reality. For instance, the correct philosophical creature-Creator relationship has not been discovered by the Indic mind, but wherever a *good* Hindū is praying, that relationship cannot but be there existentially.

This theological approach also prevents us from any false "irenicism," for it does not ignore the place and role of evil in this world, nor does it ignore the necessary discrimination of doctrines and ideas. These can often become an obstacle against the action of divine grace. Not every doctrine is fit to express, or even to "contain" the message of salvation. Integration remains—a priori—a possibility, but only a serious study—in *concreto* and a posteriori—can decide about its actual feasibility.

PRINCIPLES OF INTEGRATION

Principle of Homogeneity

Only when there is a common ground can a real meeting take place. Without the same "formal object"—in Scholastic parlance—no integration is possible because no dialogue is even possible. A true encounter implies some points of agreement, and on the same level of reality. Only homogeneous elements can be integrated.

The transgression of this principle leads either to syncretism, when we only collect, for instance, similar expressions from different philosophies, religions, or cultures; or to an attitude of negation and refusal when we see the different expressions—or even meanings—as being at variance. How often identical statements stand for an entirely different vision of reality, and not seldom do different expressions try to convey one and the same truth! *Homology* is not *analogy*, and vice versa.

If a Scotistic thesis, for instance, cannot be judged and understood from a merely *internal* Thomistic point of view, much less can Scholastic formulations be merely compared with the rather symbolic and intuitive expressions of the Upanishads. Neither can we compare popular beliefs with well-elaborated theological concepts.

In a word, we cannot compare a Christianity seen from within, from the core of its very source, and a Hinduism merely seen from without, being studied on the basis of a completely superficial knowledge. The same can be said about Hindū thinkers weighing Christianity without having any deep experience of it.

We have here, as a matter of fact, two faith-based philosophies, so to speak. But faith allows no comparisons, because it is the deepest and most personal act, the one existentially (*inchoatio vitae aeternae*)—not only in perspective—touching the Ultimate Reality. Faith, in fact, either touches the Absolute (God) or skims over it, somehow, or it is not faith at all. Now, the different theological expressions concerning this faith can be compared and understood only if we can somehow share, accept, take part in the faith of our partner in the dialogue. But can we *really* do it? That is, can we have a *genuinely* Hindū experience from within our Christian faith? This leads to our second principle.

Principle of Profundity

"What is *this*?" asks a child. Only from an insight into that "this," only from its *real* source of inspiration is a philosophy understandable. Only then we discover its truth, and its eventual deviation from it, in case, so that we are maybe able to express what our partner *means* even better than he or she does.

A real incarnation is required before redemption can take place. We must experience the problem in question in its pure nakedness, beyond words and concepts.

It is not our specific problem now to decide how far it is possible to make this experience with Hinduism as a whole, but we may remember that the Fathers and also the holy Doctors of the Church did something of this kind. This is obviously a duty for mystical theology, not for academic scholarship—but we should remember that even theology is a gift of the Spirit.

To put it in a different way: *contemplation* is the best term to express this second principle. Only true contemplation opens the doors of Indic wisdom. The sharing of one's contemplation was the work of the *magister in sacra pagina* (Bible teacher) in the golden age of scholastic theology. According to the Angelic Doctor,¹ it was the teaching coming from the fullness of contemplation (*ex plenitudine contemplationis derivatur*). This very action creates *tradition* because it makes true the phrase *contemplata aliis tradere*, that is, to transmit the contemplated things to others.

This all amounts to saying that we are here dealing with a principle of *organic growth*, because there is no authentic growth, that is, integration, without a development starting from within, from that "growing point" we have to discover if we want to be true theologians in *aedificatione Corporis Christi*, to build the Body of Christ.

It is precisely the fullness of Christ—which theologians try to work out in the church by their intellect—that allows us such an internal experience of any other truth. But, as we just said, the integration of such an experience belongs to the organic growth of the church. This stresses the meaning of our third principle.

Principle of Tradition

Christian integration rejects any absolutely new system or radical starting point ignoring twenty centuries of Catholic theology—as well as millennia of human thought. Christ has been at work since the beginning, and history is a fundamental dimension of the church. Even if at times a theologian may feel the past as a burden, taking it on is part of his co-redemptive task.

This principle means that it is not sufficient to Christianize, say, Śaṅkara. If he has positive values at all, they should be integrated into the catholic doctrinal body even at the price of abandoning less suitable philosophical perspectives. We may take St. Thomas Aquinas as an example: he did not mean to Christianize Aristotle as rather to integrate him into the Augustinian tradition, which according to Thomas was simply a synonym of Christian tradition. We cannot do just the same, however, because today, in our current era, we cannot ignore his and others' efforts and make as if they had never existed. The Church, in fact, has now formulated many Christian doctrinal truths in patristic, Thomistic (and modern) terms. Besides, Thomas's "whole world" just included the Hellenic (and "Arabian") and Jewish-Christian culture, while nowadays our world displays a pluralism of cultures we cannot neglect any longer.

We do not mean by this that we should stop at the old formulas and renounce any new kind of development or thought. We want to affirm just the opposite: we cannot shut ourselves up in the sphere of our intellectual interests and ignore both the past and our contemporary history.

The principle of tradition is not a principle of immobility. This would be stagnation. On the contrary, it is a dynamic principle, for tradition is a living stream in the church that cannot be frozen and stopped. The moment we stop tradition, we are no longer traditional; we are traitors:² we no longer convey the living message, we do not trade with it—as we are

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas.

² *Editorial note:* In Latin, both "tradition" and "treason" were expressed by the same verb, *tradere*

asked to in the parable of the Talents—but we bury it for sheer fear of losing it, because our faith has ceased to be a living one. The very essence of tradition implies that we leave behind the steps by which we climb up the mountain where the living God dwells.

. . .

The *how* of this integration is a burning question about which I would eventually like to say a little bit with regard to concrete topics such as creation, truth, time, Advaita. It is not my task now, nor does it belong to any single person. It is the work of an entire generation. And I am convinced that this generation is our own.

(to pass on, to hand over). The play on words already works in Italian, "*tradizionali/traditori*," as it can be seen in the words here added by Panikkar to the Italian version of the essay: the sentence did not appear in the original English text.

Part Two

THE MYSTERY OF WORSHIP IN HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY*

*If a man is devout and does
his will, God listens to him.*

Jn 9:31

* Original edition: *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le Christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1970).
Translated from French and confronted with an unpublished English manuscript by Geraldine Clarkson.

FOREWORD

"Worship and contemporary man"—such was the theme of the international theological congress that took place in Munich on the occasion of the thirty-seventh World Eucharistic Congress. This present study was undertaken as an Indic contribution within the framework of the general theme.

The author has written it, not as an expert in some learned and frigid, superior and remote-from-life science of religions, but from deep within the Hindū and Christian traditions. This study springs out of an existential experience that is always ongoing, always in process of becoming, which is rich and diverse, painful at times and yet also filled with the joy of new discoveries and the hope of possible encounters at still greater depth. For the author, living experience—life, in a word—possesses supreme value. Yet "for myself, I set no store by life; I only want to finish the race."¹

This book is just an introduction to the reality of worship, a first essay; the notes are not so much references as pointers for further investigation. Our study is not confined to the past (Indology, theology) but lives the present moment and envisages a future in which there comes about a cross-fertilization of the two great cultures and religions of mankind, both of which must undergo a fresh transformation—a conversion—in order to remain faithful to the mission demanded of them by several thousand years of history.

R.P.

Varāṇasi

¹ See *Acts 20:24*.

INTRODUCTION

*This people pay me lip-service
but their heart is far from me.¹*

Mt 15:8

We have here no intention of surveying the whole field of worship. We desire simply to elucidate the *meaning* of worship in Hinduism and, if possible, to clarify by so doing an aspect of Christianity that tends to be obscure. If the object of our investigation were worship in general, we would have been obliged to take into consideration certain questions that we here expressly leave to one side. However, everything in this realm is based upon a certain notion of the essence of worship that carries, in our opinion, its own hallmark of truth, being authenticated by the "act" itself and by texts concerning it, and that is in harmony with the original underlying concept of Hinduism, as also that of Christianity and religion in general. Our inquiry, however, without requiring to plumb the depth of this concept, claims to possess a justification of its own.

The Importance of This Question for Christianity Today

The question of worship in Hinduism is of the utmost concern to contemporary Christianity, not only in order that she may gain a better understanding of Hinduism but also from three other points of view: first, a consideration of this subject sheds a ray of liberating hope upon one of the most urgent theological problems of our ecumenical age, namely the salvation of mankind. Furthermore, the Indic concept of worship constitutes a treasure bequeathed to the whole of mankind that must not be allowed to perish, but must rather be integrated into that *catholica* (the spiritual unity of the whole of humanity) that is still in process of being formed. Third, an elucidation of this question may contribute toward a deepening of spiritual life in Western Christianity by revealing a path leading toward unity and indicating in what direction unification of theory and practice, leisure and work, contemplation and action is to be sought.

The idea that we are "at the end of the present era,"² that the Christian culture of the West must, if it desires to fulfill its own spiritual mission as a vehicle of salvation, rethink and even restructure its categories—all this has become today almost a truism.³ Let us not, however, content ourselves with a negative assessment of Western culture or with a straight-

¹ Cf. Mk 7:6; Is 29:13; Ps 78:36.

² See R. Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit* (Basel: Hess, 1950).

³ See "Die universalgeschichtliche Bedeutung des europäischen Geistes," Symposium, 27–29 September 1961, Internationales Forschungszentrum für Grundfragen der Wissenschaften, Salzburg.

forward analysis of its thought-forms and their consequences. Neither of these attitudes is sufficient. Our question highlights the need for a far more radical "re-form." It is not a matter of a benevolent adjustment or of an adaptation, the lines of which are dictated by apologetics. What we are describing is on an altogether different plane. It is a matter of taking a new step in what constitutes for mankind a new awareness: the linking of the cultural development of one Western part of our contemporary world with the sum total of cultural expression of both past and present. How? By ensuring the construction of human unity on its own true, universal, that is, catholic, foundation and not upon the foundation of Western civilization, which is, perhaps, more imposing but which is exclusive and too presumptuous in its claims. In other words, it is a matter of taking world history and common humanity, with all its cultures and religions, as the foundation for that synthesis that is desirable in this day and age, in which the Western adventure may not act as catalyst, but not the other way round.*

This emphasis does not detract in any respect from the central position of Christ, rather the reverse. Just because He did not come for one race or for one particular culture but for the whole cosmos from the beginning of time, it is He precisely who initiates discussion and demands this universal openness. This "moment" in the history of salvation is the *kairos* of contemporary Christianity. The Mediterranean is ceasing to be spiritually *mare nostrum*, although it remains *mediterraneum*. It may well be that Jerusalem with the rock of the ancient temple (*Quèbat al-Sakhra*) and the altar of the new covenant must become once again not only the holy city (*al-Quds*) but the city in the midst, the city *mediator*.

The Absolute Claims of Christianity—A Scandal

The Christian adage "No salvation outside the church" is nowadays seriously undermined by two opposing points of view: on the one hand by the *microdoxical* belief that condemns those who are situated outside the church defined exclusively in terms of the visible and on the other by that eclecticism that regards the church as solely invisible and hence unrecognizable, thus proclaiming the equality of all religions and declaring salvation to depend solely on the subjective will. The first doctrine is utterly untenable, but the response of eclecticism is no less irreconcilable with Christian teaching. The first contradicts the catholicity and, indeed, the holiness of the church, not to mention the very justice of God himself, while the second militates against two other essential characteristics of the church, namely, unity and apostleship, and even, some would say, the central Christian dogma of the unique Mediatorship of Christ. If the individual conscience constitutes the sole instrument of salvation, then the church is superfluous or at least of secondary importance, in no way indispensable. The problem could perhaps be summarized thus: how can one possibly maintain that salvation depends upon the performance of a ritual?¹ Is not this a recourse to the purely magical?

We have here an unambiguous manifestation of the attitude of a rational and secularized mentality.² The first reaction of ancient India would undoubtedly be to formulate

* It is on these lines that the UNESCO program for East-West understanding is to be interpreted.

¹ This problem was dealt with by St. Augustine on the occasion of his dispute with the Donatists on the validity of the sacraments of schismatics. See, for example, J. Guitton, *Le temps et l'éternité chez Platon et saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin et Cie, 1933), pp. 319ff.

² Dismissal of the *Sehadsas* and new *Sehadastis* on the subject of nature and supernature are themselves to be regarded against a background of the theory of the seven functions and of a knowledge. Everything revolves around the act of faith and man's acts of intellect and will. The purely ontological aspect is *waqtat* as regarded. This is why such a concept runs into difficulties as regards infant baptism and *sabarsat*. (cf. *Chaitan*, where the unbaptized)

the opposite question: how can one possibly make salvation dependent upon a merely subjective opinion?

This leads us to the very heart of our problem. What is a "rite"? What is the meaning of "worship"?

The flow of Indic thought would follow closely the following course: if ritual is action devoid of "being," then all worship is superfluous, even harmful, and must be rejected; but if it is a fruitful action, charged with being, if it possesses ontological efficacy, then it is an indispensable means to salvation. It is not fortuitous that all religions make salvation dependent upon rite and connect it with worship. There is no salvation without an initiation into worship and no salvation without a sacrament.

The basic intuition at all events is that only liturgical action can bring about salvation, because it alone, being closely linked with God's saving action, is capable of producing conversion, repentance, a break with the past, and the thrust of the soul toward higher things. In other words, "salvation" is not equivalent to "subjective well-being" (it is not a psychological state), but is rather a plenitude of being that can only be reached by an experience of the mystery of death and resurrection. There is no salvation without rebirth.

When Westerners talk nowadays of the "absolute claim" of Christianity, it seems nearly always that these protagonists and their opponents are tacitly assuming that salvation is simply the conclusion of a life bent on good, the outcome of upright intention, the natural goal of natural existence. In other words, the question of salvation, which is a purely religious concern, is viewed in a context that is completely a-religious. Too frequently we forget that salvation in each religion is not only the happy ending of a biographical novel but also the final state transcending Man, which this latter must first of all achieve or discover. For all the religions, "salvation" means, not an everlasting and never-fading *earthly* paradise but something quite other, namely, union with the Absolute, whatever name may be used to describe it.

The stumbling block presented by Christianity to the modern world is occasioned less by the absolute nature of its demands (which, if properly understood, constitute an ontological necessity and not a juridical monopoly) than by its insistence upon the need for salvation at all. In other words, modern humanism does not take gladly to the idea of needing to be saved nor to the idea of redemption being a condition of salvation. An acquaintance with Hinduism will perhaps enable us to emphasize more strongly the suprahuman character of salvation and to contribute thus to a closer evaluation of the absolute claims of Christianity—claims made not for the benefit of Christianity itself but for the benefit of Man.

Ecumenical Perspective

The clarification of the meaning of worship in Hinduism performs a twofold theological function. On the one hand, it is of assistance in clarifying the corresponding Christian concept by shedding new light on certain latent and somewhat neglected intuitions contained therein, and on the other, the Hindū theology of worship is not only capable of bringing fresh life to the classical Christian doctrine but offers also fresh insights that, if developed and integrated, could very well revitalize Christianity and keep it in a state of alert receptivity.

Until now the Christian mystery has been compared almost exclusively with the Greek or Hellenistic mysteries.⁷ This was justified historically by the fact that Christianity devel-

⁷ See, for example, H. Rahner, "Das christliche Mysterium und die heidnischen Mysterien," in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 11/1944 (Zürich: Rhein, 1945), pp. 347-449 (English trans.: "The Christian Mystery and the Pagan Mysteries," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Bollingen Series 30, 2 [New

oped chiefly in a Hellenistic milieu. Nevertheless, the history of Christianity has not yet been brought to a conclusion. The horizon grows broader and deeper when we take into consideration the mysteries presented to us by other religions. The fact that the dialogue of the fathers with Hellenism is, for the first time, becoming progressively less audible as louder sounds are heard of a more comprehensive and more profound dialogue with all the cultures and religions of the world is a spiritual sign of our time. The present-day veritable enthusiasm for patristics has nothing to do with infatuation for the dim distant past or disguised criticism of scholasticism. It springs from a certain sense of confidence in face of the future.¹

This sort of "ecumenical ecumenism," which is only possible in an encounter in depth, is an integral part of the church's life and function and facilitates her growth. The normal development of dogma, like that of any healthy metabolism, does not take place only internally, but involves to the same extent the proper integration of external elements that have been diffused through all the world by the Lord, the *Pantokrator*.² The sole mission of the church is, surely, to gather together into unity the scattered and dispersed children of God.³

In this day and age, any problem that might be termed spiritual, any problem above all that might be termed religious, is, unless set in a universal perspective, ill-framed, to say the least.⁴ Do not even interconfessional squabbles among Christians present a more peaceable and serene appearance when viewed in the light of a universal vision?⁵

Such domestic Christian disagreements must certainly not be underestimated, but when considered from a broader point of view, they take on more reasonable proportions. Furthermore, the existing divisions within the Christian world would undoubtedly discover within the broader framework of "ecumenical ecumenism" certain meeting points that would enable them to go further in the transcendence of their differences.⁶ Here, however, we are touching upon another dimension of ecumenism: the relations between Christianity and the other world religions, not only those that are called "great religions" but also with all those described as "primitive."

The fear, readily understandable in the last century—lest similarities between Christianity and the other religions might impair the uniqueness and originality of the gospel and thus, by implication, of Christ himself—is based both on a misconception about the other religions

York: Pantheon Books, 1955), pp. 337–401 (which contains an excellent bibliography and is important throughout for the problem that is our present concern); K. Prüm, *Der christliche Glaube und die altheiönische Welt* 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935); Prüm, *Christentum als Neuheitserlebnis* (Freiburg im. Br: Herder, 1939); and R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, trans. from the German (New York: Meridian Books, 1957). The works of Odón Casel are also full of merit.

¹ See for example, Y. Congar, "L'esprit des Pères d'après Moehler," in his supplement to *Esquisses du mystère de l'Eglise* (Paris: Cerf, 1941), pp. 129–48.

² See Mt 13:35; Mk 4:1ff.; Lk 8:4ff.

³ See Jn 11:52.

⁴ See John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961.

⁵ A simple study of the theological controversies between Rome and Constantinople from the Indic point of view impresses one immediately with the fact that it is a question of a family quarrel. Theological differences between Dominicans and Franciscans have not yet disappeared, but who among them today would conceivably denounce his opponent as a heretic?

⁶ It should be especially clear to remark that internal divisions within the Christian fold sometimes reach a supracultural depth that cannot always be found in other circles. Let us note, however, that these latter do not concern themselves in the realm of philosophy but enter upon a real discussion of such theology and ecclesiology. Whomever designates other religions as being purely human phenomena cannot claim to have the spirit of the gospel. If Christ is not born within other religions, he will always remain a stranger to them. "He needs a mother in order to come into the world."

and a superficial understanding of Christianity itself. The resemblances are, indeed, far more authentic than one is inclined to realize. They are indeed so deep that history alone cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for them, for these similarities are rooted in the very being of Man and stem from that universal Christian providence that is concerned with the whole of humanity along with the sum total of its religions, or else Christianity is doomed to be a mere sect¹⁴ among many others.¹⁵

The present-day study of religions shows that a certain type of conservatism has remained more open toward the universal religious values of every age than has a certain more progressive approach. Of this we have an example in the doctrine of the sacraments. While preserving her stress on the inner spiritual aspect, the Catholic Church has never permitted to be obscured the aspect of transcendence and outward manifestation.¹⁶ If certain Christians experience not infrequently a feeling of resistance to innovations and refinements, it is due to an instinctive reflex action and nonreflective self-defense. Was it not in this way that equilibrium was often maintained when it was threatened by reforms that were admittedly urgently desirable?¹⁷ On this point there are many things that could be said, but we will content ourselves with two main points.

1. Ecumenical dialogue can only be properly undertaken in a universal perspective as possible. If one takes stock of a problem from one angle only, one is practically certain to be biased. Take, for example, the divergence of opinion between Catholics and Protestants with regard to the sacraments of other religions. From a psychological point of view, one can certainly understand that wistful longing and an urgent concern for reconciliation may blind men's eyes to certain essential elements enshrined in the plenitude of the *catholica*. It is only through an awareness of the universal issues involved that a hasty devotion may be combined with an indispensable patience.

By "universal" is meant neither "abstract" nor "syncretistic" but, simply, "catholic." Now this sort of universal thinking aims at discovering a perspective from which all shades of

¹⁴ See Acts 24:14: Christianity is the *ὁδὸς*, the way, the path (cf. Jn 14:6), which is considered by many people, including even Christians sometimes, as a *αἵρεσις*, a party. In this passage from the Acts, the Vulgate most unfortunately uses the word *secta* instead of *via*, and several recent translations do very little by way of correction. By way of contrast, one may refer to the Jerusalem Bible, to the edition of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, the edition of Montserrat, etc.

¹⁵ Statements like the following—which in their own age, if met in isolation from their authors' opinions, could scarcely pass as Christian—seem to us to contain a deep truth: "The Christian sacrifice is in this respect one of the most instructive that can be found in history. Our priests are intending, by means of the same visual acts, practically the same effects as were our remote ancestors. The mode of consecration of the Catholic mass is, in its general lines, identical with that of Hindū sacrifice" (H. Hubert and M. Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," *L'année sociologique* (Paris) 2 (1897–98): p. 131. We would perhaps not say the same for the thought of C. G. Jung on the mass, though it contains also some very valuable ideas. See "Das Wandlungssymbol in der Messe," in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 8/1940–1941 (Zürich: Rhein, 1942), pp. 67–155, elaborated on in *Von den Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zürich: Rascher, 1954).

¹⁶ See L. Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), pp. 2ff., which shows how the Roman Catholic Church maintained the wholeness of the liturgy, even in periods when essential aspects of certain other questions were lost to view.

¹⁷ See, for example, the deep theological signification of the famous "saetas" or Andalusian hymns authorized for use in Holy Week. The remarks of A. Dohmes in his article "Der pneumatische Charakter des Kultgesanges nach frühchristlichen Zeugnissen" (in the collection of essays in memory of O. Casel, *Vom christlichen Mysterium* [Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1951], pp. 35–53) can be applied also to this mixture of "primitivism" and superstition that constitutes Andalusian spirituality.

particular opinions¹⁸ are taken into consideration and, where possible, brought together. The fact that this may happen without any sacrifice of the concreteness of truth is a further sign of true catholicity.¹⁹

2. Only from within the most traditional of all positions can one best serve the ecumenical movement. The reason is that this movement proceeds in fact less from an active desire for agreement than from a serious and authentic concern with truth. Yet history simply does not start with the last few centuries nor even with the Christian era. It goes back to Adam and, in a certain sense, to the creation of the world. The truth of mankind is as old as Man, though Man does not possess it in its plenitude any more than does any other of earth's creatures, yet since Adam lives from an uninterrupted ontological tradition, the outlook of ecumenical ecumenism is, in this sense, traditional.²⁰

In Jesus Christ, Man is, certainly, a new creature²¹ and the Spirit of Christ refashions the universe;²² but that same Spirit was at work before Abraham²³ and blows wherever it will.²⁴ The historicity of Christ, precisely because it is history, involves a past. Its roots reach down as far as Adam.²⁵ Christ had both precursors and prophets, even among the "Gentiles." Furthermore, there is, side by side with the Old Testament, another covenant, the cosmic covenant. It is in the new promise that both find, though differently, their fulfillment. How could Christianity clear the decks of all other religions? It would be not only a crime and a sacrilege but an impossibility, for Man's connection with religion is by no means either superficial or purely intellectual. To attack his religion is to affront Man himself, and if one desires to save the latter, one must at the same time "save" his religion.²⁶

By "tradition," however, is not meant traditionalism nor simply a stationary backward look. One only truly abides by a tradition if one assumes its onward transmission. The person who is attached to Tradition concerns himself less with that which has been handed down to him than with knowing how he in his turn is to hand it on. Our ecumenism is not an inspired "notion" particular to our present century. It is, in fact, not even a novelty, but rather a discovery. Its only ambition is to reconcile and coordinate what already exists (but in a state of dispersion) upon earth, in order to guide human destiny to its proper goal, in community and in completeness. Ecumenism is grafted upon tradition precisely because, in its fidelity to mankind, it aims at advancing the progress of human traditions.²⁷

¹⁸ "Since Christianity claims to be a universal faith, it can only survive by showing that it can assimilate not only what is digestible to the Christian constitution in Plato and Aristotle, but also whatever in Oriental religion seems to point the way of Christ" (R. C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times* [London: Faber and Faber, 1958], p. 166).

¹⁹ See R. Panikkar, *Maya e Apocalisse* (Rome: Abete, 1966), pp. 241-90.

²⁰ This is not to be confused with the metaphysics of tradition according to people like R. Guénon or F. Schuon, although one could find certain memorable points of contact between the two views.

²¹ See 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; etc.

²² See Rev 21:5; Col 3:10; Eph 4:23; Ps 104:30; etc.

²³ See Jn 8:52-58.

²⁴ See Jn 3:8.

²⁵ See Gen 2:15.

²⁶ We cannot here draw the conclusions of this idea, which would be full of import for a theology of mission.

²⁷ This "ecumenical ecumenism" affords a Catholic response to the question, inevitable today, of toleration. See, for example, J. W. Hauer, *Toleranz und Intoleranz in den nichtchristlichen Religionen*

Western Cultural Thinking

These questions directly confront the West, where people are expounding more than ever before the supreme importance of contemplation,²⁸ the value of tranquility,²⁹ the necessity of leisure,³⁰ and other similar themes.³¹ Much of great importance has been written on these subjects, but it is essential to add that we must avoid all semblance of nostalgia for times past and now idealized. Europe is unable to turn the clock back, and so also in Asia. Activity must be controlled and subordinated; it can and must be completed and rightly orientated—without, however, robbing Western culture of its own dynamic.

One has no right to thwart the daring enterprise of the West nor to stifle the spirit of initiation of which it is the proof.³² The earth is not heaven nor is this world a vast cloister, nor the nature of Man purely contemplative. A progressively more universal social organization and a higher degree of development of human awareness do not permit us today a return to the past or to a human community oriented wholly toward "acosmic" contemplation.³³

Furthermore, stress upon action,³⁴ the preeminence of doing,³⁵ and the dignity of creation³⁶ cannot and must not be underrated in our day and age. Contemporary voices are quite right in denouncing the instability and weakness of our present-day culture.³⁷ Worship, that is to

(Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961), pp. 91ff.; R. Panikkar, "Pluralismus, Toleranz und Christenheit," in H. Schomerus (ed.), *Pluralismus, Toleranz und Christenheit* (Nürnberg: Abendländische Akademie, 1961), pp. 117–42 (now in Volume VI/1 of this *Opera Omnia*).

²⁸ See, for example, J. Pieper, *Glück und Kontemplation* (Munich: Kösel, 1958); J. Maritain, *Primaute du spirituel* (Paris: Plon, 1927); T. Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), trans. from the French, *Semences de contemplation*, to quote only a few works of different countries of origin.

²⁹ See M. Picard, *Die Welt des Schweigens* (Stuttgart-Zürich: E. Rentsch, 1959), trans. Presses universitaires de France.

³⁰ See J. Pieper, *Musse und Kult* (Munich: Kösel, 1948, 1958); J. Leclercq, *Eloge de la paresse* (Brussels: J. Vandenplas, 1948); R. Guardini, *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1918).

³¹ We refer here to innumerable modern books that tend to present the wisdom of the East as a remedy for Western disquiet.

³² See R. Panikkar, "Forme e crisi della spiritualità contemporanea," *Studi Cattolici* (Rome) 6(33) (1962): pp. 9–23.

³³ There may, of course, be exceptions that, on account of the extraordinary witness they present, serve to confirm the general rule. See, for example, in the case of India the invaluable essay by J. Monchanin and H. Le Saux, *Ermite du Saccidananda* (Tournai-Paris: Casterman, 1956).

³⁴ Buddhism may be said to represent this attitude when taken to its logical conclusion, for it gives precedence on principle to *karma-marga* over *jñāna-marga*. The theoretical question of the being and existence of God is in fact regarded as subsidiary to the practical and existential means of sanctification.

³⁵ It should not be forgotten that Hinduism allows existential equality to the two parallel paths of "action" and "knowledge." Cf., for example, *SantPar* 240.6; *BG* III.3ff. with the concept of *naïṣkarmya* (inaction understood as a "going beyond action"). See the chapter on *bhakti-marga*.

³⁶ See the important material already published on the theology of work. Cf., among other writings, the third theme, "De vero conceptu laboris," of the Fifth International Thomist Congress, Rome, September 13–17, 1960, and *Thomistica morum principia* (Rome: Officium Libri Catholici, 1960), pp. 481–648, containing seventeen articles of widely differing and unequal merit.

³⁷ Cf., for example, Gabriel Marcel, *Les Hommes contre l'humain* (Paris: La Colombe, 1951); *Le déclin de la Sagesse* (Paris: Plon, 1954); G. Thibon, *Retour au réel* (Lyon: H. Lardanchet, 1943); Th. Steinbüchel, *Christliche Lebenshaltungen in der Krisis der Zeit und des Menschen* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1949); J. Maritain, *Le crépuscule de la civilisation* (Montreal: Éditions de l'Arbre, 1941); M. de Corte, *Philosophie des mœurs contemporaines* (Brussels: Éditions Universitaire, 1944).

say, the liturgy and the accompanying liturgical frame of mind that brings strength to bear upon any situation and pervades the whole claim not, certainly, to resolve the conflict, but at least to go beyond the apparent contradictions and maintain a balance.

This is not a question of finding a counterweight, namely, contemplation, quiet, prayer, and relaxation to neutralize and counterbalance the pressure of action, work, achievement, and research. That might be of some use in the political or cultural spheres, but if our aim is neither to increase the disintegration forces within modern society nor to introduce a purely "reactionary" element into culture and politics, we must look for a higher synthesis.³⁸

The path leading to this objective passes by that worshipful awareness and liturgical bent of mind that we have just indicated. The monk praying in his distant retreat is himself one of the powers of the universe; in *contemplatione activus*, his prayer and his life not only bear witness to the other world but also, to no less a degree, help fashion this world and play in it a historical role. To this, however, must be added the complementary attitude of the secular man, in *actione contemplativus*, the contemplative in the midst of action, aware of the supernatural value of work and also of the liturgical dimension of all action that is truly worthy of the name. Just as the monk in his apparent ineffectiveness proves nevertheless the strength and vigor of his life and of his prayer, so also the secular man senses beneath his outward appearance of power the insufficiency of his effort and the weakness of his action. "Extremes meet."³⁹ Worship and liturgy fulfill here the task of reconciliation.

The contemplative life must not be viewed as the antithesis of a life lived in the midst of the world of toil and the activity which is the hallmark of that world, any more than being can be regarded as the opposite of action. Are not both indispensable elements of the "one thing needful"?⁴⁰ Mary, it is true, "chose the best part," which is the state of monasticism, in other words, of institutionalized contemplation,⁴¹ but we must be careful not to forget that contemplation constitutes only one part—the best part, indeed, but in the last analysis one part only with respect to the whole. To Martha's lot fell the other part, without which Man cannot live.⁴² Action and contemplation form together one complete whole, one harmony; the one goes hand in hand with the other.⁴³ Action without contemplation is an empty thing,

³⁸ The popular movements of history, dangerous and blind as for the most part they may be, contain generally an undeniable foundation of justification that reactionaries are incapable of recognizing. The technical advance of modern Man, with all that it involves, cannot be sacrificed to a utopian ideal of contemplative life. There is room most certainly for certain particular vocations, but the dynamism of our time demands a theandric synthesis, such as is in any case written into the very constitution of the plan of redemption.

³⁹ See H. U. von Balthazar, *Das betrachtende Gebet* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1955).

⁴⁰ See Lk 10:42.

⁴¹ The role of monasticism is indispensable for mankind and for the church. See, for example, L. Bouyer, *Le sens de la vie monastique* (Paris: Brepols, 1950).

⁴² Many of the great mystics were, undeniably, men of action, as is attested by a study of parristics and also by the Rhenish or Spanish schools of mystical contemplatives. See the trenchant defense of Martha by none other than Meister Eckhart: "Maria ist erst (eine solche) Martha gewesen, ehe sie (die reife) Maria werden sollte; denn als sie (noch) zu Füßen unseres Herrn saß, da war sie (noch) nicht (die wahre) Maria: wohl war sie's dem Namen nach, sie war's aber (noch) nicht in ihrem Sein; denn sie saß (noch) im Wohlgefühl und süßer Empfindung und war in die Schule genommen und lernte (erst) leben" ("Martha aber stand ganz wesenhaft da," in J. Quint (ed.), *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* [Munich: C. Hanser, 1955], p. 288n28).

⁴³ This polarity, its justification and also the transcendence of it, is a classical theme of Hindû wisdom. See, for example, BU IV.4.2 and 6; IsU II; BG III.4 and 17–20; IV.12–22; BS III.4.9–17; Yogavasisṭha VI.199, etc.

lacking in cohesion, sterile. Contemplation without action is, on the other hand, blind; one might say perhaps, following Kant, that it makes a wry face at history, cold shoulders Man, and spurns God's creation.⁴⁴ True contemplation, however, is the supreme activity, just as authentic action contains always an element of contemplation. The synthesis must be theandric, and the path to follow is that of liturgy, the *ἔργον*, that is to say, the work of worship.

It is not, therefore, the worship of work—that heresy of today that is in the last resort a nonsense or contradiction in terms, for worship is always transcendent—nor the worship of activity, but rather the activity of worship, which constitutes the essential ingredient in Man's situation.⁴⁵ Now just as work is not limited to beating an anvil, so worship is not to be limited by definition merely to a wholly external ceremonial. It is a question of discovering the contemplative core within action, better still, of perceiving the potential of action within contemplation and finally of grasping the divine and theandric import of every authentically human action.

Taken separately, neither action nor contemplation contain real human value. The former sees in the latter only spiritual gluttony and egoism: "There will be quite enough chance in heaven to contemplate without one frittering away one's time down here in contemplation of a mediocre variety. Why don't these people make some contribution toward the vital constructive work of our world?"—while from the other and opposite point of view action is viewed simply as vanity and a source of sin: "Nothing permanent is achieved by it. One just labours under an illusion and does oneself grievous harm. One toils for secondary objectives, while allowing real life to pass one by." It is only by a synthesis of the two that life takes on a meaning that is fully human and that corresponds to the reality of human situations. It is only when my acting is something more than activism and when my contemplation is something more than a simple gaze that the two combined will constitute one single and perfect human value.⁴⁶ It is this that happens in worship.⁴⁷ Culture must recover its cultic dimension.

We have no right to disparage or underestimate the amazing treasures of the Western cultural heredity, let alone to treat them as diabolic or sheerly materialistic. This almost magic word "culture" means for modern Western man *opus hominum*, that is the workmanship of Man and human work. Man has perfected and appropriated this culture to such an extent that it has become finally independent of him and even threatens to devour him. It is not surprising that there are loud laments that Man has renounced his own power and freedom and subordinated them to a machine, to technology, to "civilized" society. His handiwork, it is said, rules him to such an extent that he can no longer escape systematization. He is perforce a "civilized" man, who can neither sleep without a bed nor think without a newspaper, who does not know how to occupy his leisure without looking at pictures or enjoy himself without costly and complicated gadgets and who cannot dispense with a considerable number of objects, including money.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), p. 98 (A51/B75).

⁴⁵ The "*ut operaretur*" of Gen 2:15 does not refer solely to the tilling of the soil nor to the "upkeep" of man's follows but also to the building up of the entire cosmos, mankind included, until there comes about the "full stature" and "mature manhood" of the sons of God (cf. Eph 4:13 NEB).

⁴⁶ See the meaningful concept of *lokasaṃgraha*: to hold the world together; *loka* (world) *saṃ* (together) *graha* (to hold, to grasp). Now, the world, as BG III.20 tells us, must be held together by works (*karmanai*). But the only effective works are sacrificial works; cf. III.9. See also IV.23: *yajñāya carataḥ karma* [performing all work as a sacrifice].

⁴⁷ "Perform your work [your action, your *karma*] like an offering [*yajña*]" (BG III.9).

⁴⁸ Certain European countries, for example, spend more each year on alcoholic beverages than on new housing.

Worship is, on the contrary, *opus Dei*, the work of God and a divine work, or rather, it is the *opus Christi*, that is to say, theandric action, a work that is simultaneously both human and divine. It is only the performance and perfect accomplishment of worship that "modern" man will succeed today in mastering the natural world, along with its technological and other cultural advances (not to mention the supernatural) and will find in both his own proper place.⁴⁹ It is only by worship that Western man can find again his own roots and renew his links with both earth and heaven, the cosmos, the spiritual world—and with God. Worship is an affirmation of the constitutive communion of Man with the whole of the universe and permits that communion to be experienced and fully realized. The man who has "opened himself" to worship runs no risk of pure intellectualism. He knows that he is no longer a mere spectator of the way of the world nor an observer who remains an alien, external to the situation, but rather a participant sharing responsibility, an actor playing his part to the full, a real collaborator. The individual could not, as such, undertake so important a task without being overwhelmed by its difficulty and complexity. It is only the person, the member of an organic community, who is capable of carrying out worship properly and, through worship, this distinctively human and theandric task.⁵⁰

One characteristic feature of contemporary culture is the abandonment by "modern" man of rites and rituals. The lay or ordinary person has practically no rites left to perform. He had no longer any belief in them, and that is why he has lost them. He is truly "laicized." Nothing has survived except a few special rites of daily life that have taken refuge in the church, and certain superficial and secularized ceremonial performances. The civil authority is the recipient of neither unction nor sacred rite, nor for the most part of any formal blessing. The life of the world is subservient to rules and regulations and to certain forms of education, but has retained no rites.⁵¹ No longer do children kiss the hand of their parents nor the latter call down blessing upon the former, while the solemn curse in the name of God has disappeared from nearly all countries.⁵² As for oath-taking, it is now regarded as a pure formality.⁵³ The building of houses and even of churches no longer proceeds in accordance with ancient rules;⁵⁴ towns are established in accordance with whim, and treaties⁵⁵ recognize no Higher Power.⁵⁶ The slate has been wiped clean. Superstition and special group privileges replace the rites of olden days.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there exists a sacramental world, a sacramental order whose domain is not confined to the sacristy or the church building or to an agreed

⁴⁹ A commentary on 2 Kgs 17:25ff. would not be out of place here. Man cannot live without rituals.

⁵⁰ See M. Schmaus and K. Forster (eds.), *Der Kult und der heutige Mensch* (Munich: Hueber, 1961), where there is a full discussion of this subject.

⁵¹ The dismay of writers such as G. Thibon, G. Marcel, J. Maritain, M. de Corte, Th. Steinbüchel, R. Guardini, and Ch. Dawson in the face of present-day society is caused primarily by this disappearance of the rites of worship.

⁵² It is noteworthy that ritual cursing is still prevalent in Spain.

⁵³ See modern debates on the validity and meaning of the legal oath.

⁵⁴ People nowadays are inclined to smile at the fact that the builder of a temple should prepare himself for his task by prayer and fasting, though this was formerly the practice everywhere, including in Christendom. See the works of A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover, 1956); Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (London: Luzac, 1946); J. Gimpel, *Le batisseur de cathédrales* (Paris: Seuil, 1958); etc.

⁵⁵ See the well-known ceremony for the foundation of Rome. See also L. Frobenius, "Schilderung einer westafrikanischen Stadtgründung," *Monumenta Africana* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1939), etc.

⁵⁶ Until the nineteenth century, political treaties in Europe were signed "in nomine sanctae et indivisae Trinitatis."

⁵⁷ Hereditary titles, e.g., are suppressed and new ones are invented (as has happened in India).

area labeled "holy," but which is coextensive with the whole cosmos.⁵⁸ Now this sacramental order, despite certain deviations, remains deeply rooted in one way or another in the hearts of men, even where the contemporary Western way of life has taken its toll. Worship has, without doubt, been secularized, but Man cannot sever his own deep roots. The spontaneous emergence of all sorts of mass movements that often serve to keep us busy (collective infatuation for a film star or football champion, a superman of science or a front-ranking politician) amply proves that Man cannot live without worship.⁵⁹ Man cannot, moreover, lead an authentic life without true, authentic worship. Worship shapes and fashions the most intimate depths of consciousness, both individual and collective. This consciousness, however, can depart from Man if worship is replaced by a mere ritualism.⁶⁰ "Worship is as it were the embodiment of faith, that which could not be if Man were not endowed with a body."⁶¹ Just as one cannot live without a body and without a certain element of faith, so one cannot live without worship, not only from the historical but also from the ontological point of view. Therefore, all that concerns worship is of vital importance, concerning as it does both faith and Man.

We do not intend here, however, to pursue the theme of worship in general. We shall confine ourselves to following its tracks within Hinduism, while pursuing our quest for the kingdom of God. The rest, let us hope, will be "added also."⁶²

The Importance of This Question for India Today

If our presentation of this theme is to be complete and balanced, we cannot omit reference to this aspect, for we believe that the subject under consideration is not merely one for theorizing or of interest solely to Christians but that it is also of importance for the current situation in India.

As everybody knows, political efforts are being made in India to discover, for the welfare of its citizens, a middle way between liberal capitalism and totalitarian communism. Great though the attraction of the "free" world with all its achievements may be, the allure of communism and of the communist system is no less strong. As regards the material things of life, one may well wonder whether planning in the Chinese manner might not bring about swifter and more complete results than political action framed in accordance with the rhythm of India.

Our particular concern is in the following facts. In the West, one speaks of the dignity of the human person and of the nobility of human toil as being values, both of them, due to the direct influence of Christianity. An ethic of work is not, however, absent from communism and a certain sublimation takes place within the masses that plays an analogous role to that of the dignity of the person. India, on the other hand, does not feel at ease in

⁵⁸ The vast bibliography of recent dates on this subject is some testimony to the fact that modern Man tends to revive ritual practices.

⁵⁹ "The life of modern man abounds in half-forgotten myths, in hierophanies that are no longer meaningful, and in symbols despoiled of their content. The progressive desacralization of modern man has altered the contents of his spiritual life but has not affected the matrices of his imagination; a great deal of mythological debris is present in the realms beyond his control" (M. Eliade, *Images et Symboles* [Paris: Gallimard, 1952], p. 20).

⁶⁰ See P. Marussek, "Gewissen und Kult in tiefenpsychologischer Sicht," in M. Schmaus and K. Forster (eds.), *Der Kult und der heutige Mensch*, pp. 154ff.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See Lk 12:31; Mt 6:33. We consider that an equitable appreciation of Hinduism, so often wrongly judged, should be included in this "righteousness."

either of these situations. It is only a renewal of the meaning of worship or, to be more exact, a revival of this latter that would furnish for her a practical solution to the tension that we have just mentioned.

By promoting village industries and "arts and crafts," Gandhi was doing far more than taking a political measure. He was reaching the very soul of the people and evoking responsive vibrations from the depths of their beings. Hand-spinning represented for him and for the Indian people far more than an economic measure to combat the competition of English mill-made materials. It represented the wheel of India, the wheel of the world and of the cycle of existence, the revival of an element of worship in the work of Man's hands and the reintegration of ritual into Man's daily life. Through its practice, Hindū spirituality (which is included to hold itself aloof for earthly values) was linked afresh to the daily round, obligation being again restored to the center of human life,⁶³ but we must expatiate no further!

If this matter is of grave concern for India, it is so not least because of the part played by Indian culture in our modern world. In the symphony of the new universal culture that is in process of being composed, India could well provide the *basso ostinato*, the deep bass note that represents mankind's link with the most ancient of all traditions. The danger that faces our speech is that its obsession with its own achievements may militate against its preserving a living link with the common basis of all the great traditional realities of mankind. One phenomenon of our technological civilization is the loss of historic memory among the successive generations of the industrial centers. (The Crusades remain far more vividly in the memory of Middle Eastern peoples than does the First World War in the memories of the people of Europe.) It has already become difficult to imagine the life, thoughts, and feelings of the men of two centuries ago—that is to say, without machines, without electricity, and without newspapers and other means of communication.

Indian spirituality, an awareness of worship, and the performance of rites all belong essentially to the earliest tradition of mankind and can consequently play their part in averting modern Man's double bereavement: his loss of his roots in Mother Earth and his separation from the rest of mankind and, in the final analysis, from himself.

We have no intention, of course, of putting the Western world—or for that matter, India herself—into reverse. Our justification of worship and of the immortal human and religious heritage that is ours would be wrongly understood if interpreted as a defense of ritualism, superstition, or merely formal religion. India suffers, at the hands of some, from a certain sort of religious inflation, which is not the case in the West. There is need for much wisdom and the practice of "*viveka*,"⁶⁴ that is to say, of the Indian quality of discernment. The proverb exhorts us not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. India herself—above all, the India of progress and modernization—is in urgent need of worship and must not at all costs—and besides how could she?—break with tradition. Now the real and most glorious tradition of India is indubitably not that of armed might or of worldly power, but of contemplation, of the inner life. Of this lovely human heritage let us be content with examining one aspect.

⁶³ See the traditional symbolism of the wheel (*cakra*). It is related at one at the same time to the Buddha and the temporal existence of the universe (*samsāra*), and is also the official emblem of the Indian republic.

⁶⁴ Cf., for example, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's masterpiece, *Vivekacūḍamani*. See the Sanskrit-English edition of Madhayānanda (Mayavati: Advaita ashram, 1944).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE HINDŪ CONCEPT OF REALITY

To the East, three gates.

Rev 21:13

In order to clarify what has just been said and to render more intelligible what will follow, we shall do well to consider three points that give a proper perspective to our study and research. There is no question here of expounding fully the Indian worldview nor of expatiating upon all the aspects of Hinduism, but of outlining three characteristics of Hindū culture and religion that seem apposite for our purpose.¹ In the second place we shall compare certain Indian and Western concepts in order to grasp better the heart of the problem.

The Vision of the All

One question that has occupied Western philosophy from the very beginning and that epitomizes its character and its spirit is that of the cause and origin (beginning) of all things. From the *ἀρχαί* (or underlying principles) of the pre-Socratics, down to modern speculations on "the point of departure of metaphysics" (Maréchal), one and the same spirit predominates. Thomas Aquinas builds his theology upon philosophical principles. Descartes, certainly, has no other concern than to discover a foundation, an unchallengeable point of departure, which Kant subjects later on to a new critique of knowledge.² Hegel rethinks these principles, and Heidegger seeks "the essence of the ground of all things." Each advance of the Western spirit could be termed a rethinking of the beginnings. The word that is constantly used, whether explicitly or implicitly, is the prefix *meta*: metaphysics, metahistory, meta-aesthetics, metalogical, and so on are typically Western terms. *Meta* does not so much mean "summit above" as "base below." Even the mysticism of the West is a mysticism "of the ground of all things."

¹ We shall pursue our own course, but we are presupposing a certain knowledge; see, for further reading, B. Heimann, *Studien zur Eigenart indischen Denkens* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-F. Siebeck, 1930); L. Gabriel, "Einführung in indisches Denken," in E. Frauwallner, *Geschichte in der indischen Philosophie*, vol. 1 (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1953), pp. xi-xlix and others; also G. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), trans. and adapted from *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (Berlin: Teubner, 1926).

² It is very instructive, and important also, to note how Descartes finds himself constrained to reject all symbolism. See H. Gouhier, "Le refus du symbolisme dans l'humanisme cartésien," in *Umanesimo e simbolismo*, Archivio di Filosofia 2-3 (Padova: CEDAM, 1958), pp. 65-74.

It is not for nothing that it is written, "In the beginning was the Word," "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."³

Now, India also has her myths of "the beginning," but stress is laid on the fact that in the beginning there was nothing at all; it is emphasized that the ground of all things has no beginning. Later on, speculation is orientated toward the other extreme: the world never had a beginning, the Vedas have no author and Hinduism no founder. Thus India concentrates all her energies on the idea of a final goal. Her concern is no longer with the beginning but with the end, not with Alpha but with Omega, not with time but with eternity, not with what is in process of coming to be but with what has become. Nevertheless, when we say that what interests the Hindū spirit is not so much the pilgrim en route as the pilgrim who has reached his goal, not the world, but God, we are liable to fall into confusion. For India the *terminus ad quem* is not understood in terms of a *terminus quo*, which would lead us to a dynamic Western-type dualism. The end is not considered as a fulfillment, but simply as being, as reality, even perhaps as the world and Man. In a word, we must avoid falling victim to an over-neat schematization in which we conceive the viewpoints proper to the geniuses of India and the West as being diametrically opposed, as the concept of the end, of Omega, is to that of the beginning, of Alpha—which would perhaps be gratifying and would facilitate a synthesis. But India addresses herself primarily to the all qua all, and it is only from the human point of view that this all is situated at the end. Using Western terminology we may say that the first problem of philosophy for India is not, properly speaking, that of the *ἐν καὶ πολλά* (the One *and* the many) as, for Plato, nor even that of the one *or* the many (which would demand a heroic choice such as certain present-day European philosophers have dared to take), but the *ἐν ὡς πολλά* (the One as or qua many).⁴ The all remains. One may take from it or add to it, but it remains, despite all, the all.⁵

Rather than stray, however, into the realm of philosophy, let us restrict ourselves to the sphere of Hinduism. The all could not retain its character of allness except when viewed en masse and undifferentiated. No vision of the all could be comprehensive if it were not

³ See Jn 1:1 and Gen 1:1. By contrast Christ is *μετὰ τὸν νόμον* [after the law] in the economy of time (cf. Heb 7:28).

⁴ Brahman, which is, precisely, reality, is not for example a sort of being or non-being, *sat* or *asat*, but rather neither being nor non-being (nor even the negation of the two). See *RV* X.129.1–3; *SB* X.5.3.1; also *BG* IX.19; XIII.12. Ethical action is not in the sphere of the active but of the passive. Prayer does not obtain; it discovers. Eternity is not at the end of time but is in the present, etc. See also *IsU* 5: *Brahman* is both moving and unmoving, far and near, within and without. See also the following texts, which are very important in connection with this subject: *SubU* 1.1; II.1; *BU* II.3.1.

⁵ See the well-known introductory verses to one of the Upanishads, which constitute an apt motto for the indic way of thought:

*purnam adaḥ, purnam idam,
purnat purnam udacyate
purnasya purnam adaya
purnam eva vaśiṣyate.*

Fullness there, fullness here,
from fullness comes fullness,
when fullness is taken from fullness
fullness always remains.

See *IsU*; *BU* V.1; *AV* X.8.29.

unconscious and nonreflective. The all, as such, cannot indeed be contemplated at all. Brahman is not only the unknowable; according to Vedānta he does not even "know." There is *nothing* for him to know.

The all permits of no division into subject and object. There is no knowing subject, because there is not and cannot be an object of knowledge.⁶ In India anthropology may be said to play the part of theology and theology that of realization of being, with this difference however, that being is not considered in a temporal context (i.e., subject to becoming or doing) but as a completion or perfection, that is to say, as a final state or entelechy which ipso facto admits of no doctrine (which could never be definitive).⁷ India, in other words, represents a type of "pietistic agnosticism."⁸ Duality, if it puts in an appearance, must be overcome. Even within dualistic systems, and more so in pluralistic doctrines, "duality" and "plurality" do not refer to a final state, least of all from the point of view of number, but denote a characteristic of the all.

For the purpose of our study we may put it as follows: worship is not considered as an aspect of *becoming*, but rather as an aspect (perhaps the only aspect) of *being*. If in worship we attain anything at all, it is surely being that we attain, not in the sense that our being is thereby augmented or fulfilled, but in this sense: that we fully *are* only in worship, that it is not a question of approaching the goal step by step, but of overcoming the obstacles that prevent us from realizing being. The *atman* is repose (silence, tranquility, peace), as is said in one lost Upanishad.⁹

Hierarchical Structure of the All

Now, then, may the experience of diversity that cannot be denied find a place within the purview of the all? This is the baffling problem presented to the Western philosopher as well as the Indian thinker. Now, it is ceded that strictly philosophical thought was preceded, even in the West, by a nonreflective unconscious notion of the all, in which was present in a very particular manner not a synthesis (for there was nothing to "arrange") but a thesis, the all as such. We have termed it a hierarchical concept but it could equally be termed inclusive or concentric. We shall attempt to explain it in the following way:

To Christian tradition, which says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," Indian wisdom would perhaps reply, "In the end God is not going to create either heaven or earth." "Yet they will exist," retorts Christianity. "But this final state," replies Hinduism, "is like that which existed before the beginning, since both take place in an undifferentiated eternity." "Certainly," the Christian will reply, "but temporality inflicts upon the created being a wound whose scar he will retain until the new heavens and the new earth come to pass. The cosmos has perhaps *become* God, but God has not become God; God does not become, He *is*."¹⁰

⁶ In India openness toward the inner aspects of the Trinity is only in the beginning stages. See, for example, the contemplation of Brahman as Saccidānanda.

⁷ Using Christian terminology, we may say that a great part of Indic philosophy is concerned with reality *sub specie aeternitatis* and teaches a very similar doctrine to that of the "beatific vision."

⁸ This expression is borrowed, though out of a different context, from P. Mus, *Barabudur*, vol. 1 (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême Orient, 1935), p. 81.

⁹ *Upasanto 'yam atma* (BSBh III.2.17) is the response given by Śaṅkara to the question of Baskali on the subject of *brahman*.

¹⁰ This line of thought would lead us too far from our present theme. See R. Panikkar, "La Misa como 'consecratio temporis.' La tempeternidad," in *Sanctum Sacrificium* (Zaragoza, 1961), pp. 73–93. Now in Volume III/1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

The all is not the sum of different parts understood either materially or autonomously, as if each part were something in itself or for itself, independently of the fact of being a part. For each of these "parts," its fullness of being resides in its being a part. Degrees of the real are still today unintelligible to the Indian mind. The Hindū worldview does, however, include a hierarchy of being. The hierarchy does not depend simply on prerogatives of merit and of power but on being itself. The all is composed of layers of different ontological densities that are reflected in a hierarchical order. Each lower "being" is incorporated into a higher. The lower *is* insofar as it reflects the higher. Thus "beings" *exist only in Being*.¹¹ This means with regard to our subject: to the extent that it truly *is*, the world is a reflection of a higher world, and when it imitates¹² that world, it *is* that higher world.

We shall have more to say about the symbolic character of the world, for our day and age has very nearly forgotten the wealth of meaning conveyed by symbols. A symbol is never *another* reality, distinct from that which is symbolized, neither is it a sort of shadow or apparition less or more clearly defined. A symbol is *the* reality itself symbolized in a mode of existence that, with regard to ourselves—that is to say, from our own angle of knowledge—is different. The world, for India, is not the same thing as the cosmos for the ancient Greeks. Nor is it a microcosm corresponding to the all. It is rather a *mesocosm*.¹³

The variety of the particularity of the world is neither a reality *in itself* nor something that is in process of *becoming* the cosmos or the all. The world, we might say, is the whole "in pieces," God "in dispersion," Prajāpati that must be recomposed by, precisely, worship.

The Primacy of Worship

When, even today, one speaks in India of religion, the conversation nearly always centers not upon morals or doctrine but upon worship. A number of misunderstandings in East-West dialogue would be avoided if this were thoroughly understood.¹⁴ It is true that in Hindū "progressive" circles, interest in worship is at present on the wane, but it is a fact that such Hindūs always regard religion as worship, even if they look upon worship as sheer ritualism (or even superstition) and consequently reject it totally.

In our days Hinduism is much more considered as a way of life than as a compact body of dogma. It is concerned with this existential rather than with the essential, seeing that it is an existential attitude rather than the acceptance of a certain number of doctrines.

Hinduism is capable of presenting a vast array of different forms and a whole range of most diverse values (hence the large number of philosophical and ethical interpretations thereof) because it does not operate at the level of the intellect nor at the level of human values but has its roots, on the contrary, in Being—in an existence that is both undefined and undifferentiated.¹⁵ It is this that may seem strange to the "modern" Westerner, for our recent

¹¹ See our observation later on concerning the importance of the symbol in India.

¹² See, for example, *AB* VIII.2. "This" and "that" is always *anurupam*.

¹³ The expression is again taken from P. Mus, who uses this word also for the Buddhist *stupa*, p. 100.

¹⁴ When, for example, an Indian says that all religions are good and are of equal value, he is referring simply to different rites of worship that lead to the same goal.

¹⁵ See the well-known adage "The One, contemplated under various forms by the sages" (*Ekam satam babudha kalpayanti*), *RV* X.114.5; or

"They call him Indra, Varuna and Mitra,
Agni, the heavenly bird with glorious wings;
they call him Agni, Yama, Matariśvan." (*RV* I.164.46)

stage of Western culture, heir perhaps in this respect to Greek spirituality, has conceived religion—including Christianity—above all as *orthodoxy* and has disparaged somewhat right action and the part played by worship as both purveyor and savior of being.¹⁶

Although Christianity has never forgotten its own ontological content, it has often during the course of its history so taken it for granted that it has seemed to put the account almost exclusively on the question of orthodoxy.¹⁷ Hinduism, however, understands itself rather as an *orthopraxy*,¹⁸ and this latter is expressed in worship, which is thought of in terms of a way of life, in ontological terms a standard of life—that is to say, a pain that leads to real life, a pilgrimage that liberates from existence, is filled with “being” and leads to immortality. It is not surprising if the Vedas, as the *mīmāṃsā* explain, are “inspired” only insofar as they are *karma-vada*—that is to say, that they are only infallible when they prescribe actions to be performed in furtherance of a man’s final beatitude.¹⁹ *Artha-vada* (the explanation of the meaning of an injunction), orthodoxy, doctrine, is by no means infallible as such (because a doctrine is always open to different interpretation, which is not so in the case of a practical injunction). Hindū worship is not only the product of a worshipful and understanding mental attitude; it is, rather, an action fraught with being, through which Man comes to self-realization, or rather realization of his “self.”²⁰ Hinduism is first and foremost a liturgy.²¹ This brings us to the very heart of the matter, which is of capital importance for Christianity also.²²

India’s chief preoccupation is undoubtedly the question of salvation, not so much, however, the salvation of the individual and the bliss of soul for which she yearns, as the existential pursuance of salvation and, simultaneously, the essential knowledge of that ultimate, absolute, or “End” that one may simply call Being or, in theological language, salvation, *mokṣa* (*nirvāṇa*, *śūnya*, *brahman*, etc.). The dissolution of the individual may

See the same thought, *ibid.*, I.89.10; VIII.58.2. See also *YV* 32.1; *SV* 372; *AV* X.8.27, etc. “Viṣṇu is all the *devata*,” says the *TB* I.4, and the *Skanda-upaniṣad* (*apud* J. W. Hauer, *Toleranz und Intoleranz in den nichtchristlichen Religionen*, p. 68) affirms, “The heart of Śiva is Viṣṇu, and the heart of Viṣṇu is Śiva.”

¹⁶ Thanks to Odo Casel, this tradition is once again seeing the light of day. See the bibliography (115 titles) compiled by P. Bienian in the collection of essays dedicated in his memory, *Vom christlichen Mysterium*, pp. 363–75.

¹⁷ See Th. Kampmann, who says that “orthodoxy remains sterile if it lacks the efforts of orthopraxy,” “Walter Nigg und die Hagiographie,” *Hochland* (Munich) 13 (1959): p. 158; yet even in statements of this kind, orthopraxy seems to be a matter of morals rather than an onto-ethical religious doctrine that can only be put into practice in worship.

¹⁸ See J. F. Staal, “Über die Idee der Toleranz im Hinduismus,” *Kairos* (Salzburg) 4 (1959): p. 217.

¹⁹ *Svargakamo yajeta* [It is out of desire for ultimate joys that one must perform sacrifice] is an oft-repeated sentiment, which indicates also the obligatory character (*vidhi*—commandment or *nīṣedha*—prohibition) of the various Vedic injunctions. This formula is used to certify whether or not, with regard to a given injunction, one has the right to enjoy *svargakama*. In the latter case the precept is not binding and is considered as *arthavada*, theory, which may be interpreted in differing ways.

²⁰ “May I attain the summit of this rite.” Thus prays the worshiper at the beginning of each sacrifice. See *SB* I.1.1.7.

²¹ “The Vedic religion, so far as we can discern, is first of all a liturgy for which complex philosophical speculation has set the scene” (J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, vol. 1 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960], p. 104). See *ibid.*, p. 307, where we even find the term “orthopraxis.”

²² “The inner meaning of the words of Dionysius the Areopagite (understood as liturgical action, the tribute of worship, sacred dance) is fundamental to the world-view of Maximus the Confessor” (H. U. von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie* [Freiburg in Br.: Herder, 1941]; entirely rev. ed. (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1961).

well take place in order to deliver or free that which must needs be saved. There is not only, therefore, the very limited question of discovering how I, my little "me," may attain the final state, nor what knowledge of it I am able to possess, nor, in a word, my relation with the End. The question, if it is to be anything other than partial, must view my salvation in a universal perspective where the absolute is both final goal and salvation, not for myself alone but for all that is not yet assumed into this same absolute. This is not to say that, from the point of view of the individual, salvation has no meaning. Obsession with the idea of salvation may, paradoxically but understandably, lead to an individualistic isolationism, though in this case salvation, liberation, of the individual implies the abolition of all his limitations. There is in the drop of water a certain superficial tension that separates it from the mass, but that drop loses nothing of its substance when it loses itself in the sea. On the contrary it becomes the ocean. Nothing is lost if one bursts one's limitations.

This, then, is the true function of worship. It is not merely a particular practical method or a piece of theoretical knowledge, but all in one, it advances us toward the goal, enables us to recognize that goal, and effects its achievement. Whatever means or method there may be of attaining and thus of knowing and being this Absolute, that means and that method are, *by definition*, worship, under whatever aspect or appearance it may in concrete instances present itself.

Comparative Survey of the Two Cultures

In view of the fact that comparisons very often shoot wide of the mark and that any recapitulation contains many inadequacies, it may appear absurd at first sight to attempt a brief comparative analysis. Comparisons are only justified on condition that we do not lose sight of the shortcomings of this procedure and utilize our findings simply as a starting point for other more detailed and more precise statements.

On the other hand, since we are concerned here with a meeting between two cultures, how can we eliminate the element of comparison entirely?

Thus, if one were faced with the task of explaining briefly the fundamental difference between the culture of the West and that of India, one could proceed as follows: at the base of Western culture is to be found the principle of noncontradiction, while Indian culture accords the primacy of the principle of identity. We would like to illustrate the outworking of this statement in three different spheres.

The Sphere of Ontology

The foundation of Western culture is formed by the principle of noncontradiction. From the Greeks onward there has been affirmed the impenetrability of being—that is to say, that it is impossible that at one and the same time and in the same context, a thing should both be and not be. Each being is, in and for itself, unique, distinct. It is destined, "condemned" to be itself and not something else. No confusion is possible. Each "being" "is"; its own being belongs specifically and directly to it alone. If thought balks at this hypothesis, then it makes no further headway. The principle of noncontradiction is not only that of thought in general but it is also the essential scaffolding of limited and defined being. A "being" possesses limits because it is finite, and it is finite precisely in virtue of the principle of noncontradiction. If it were not operative, it would follow that one could say nothing precise about it and, in consequence, nothing determinative, defined, or definite; one could not even "think" that being, because for such "thinking" one must of necessity exclude the sphere of the infinite.

Contrariwise, the whole spiritual history of India is motivated by a quest for the principle of identity: A is A. But what is this "A identical to A"? How can one find a predicate that can fully be identified with a subject—not a single predicate that can fully be identified with a subject—not a single *predicate as such, unless, maybe, the subject through* which a man experiences this experience of identity is his own "I"? My "I," my being, is not able to be exhaustively defined by my body anymore than by my spirit, nor by any other predicate that can fully be identified with me. The I is only identical with itself if it is no longer a finite and limited I, but is the absolute. It is only in the identification of *atman* with *brahman* that there is a perfect identity, but in that case *atman* is no longer I, it is *brahman*! Essence and existence, affirm the Scholastics, only find their identity in God. True identity does not pertain to the finite world. Thought at this point is blocked; its sphere of operation is the realm of "either . . . or," while identity deals with "this . . . and also that."

If the principle of noncontradiction has the primacy, then thought is always the chief performer, not least in the discovery of reality; more than this, thought enables us to discern different degrees of reality. It cannot pass the portals of the infinite, but it can reach the threshold and, starting from this highest peak, discover the diverse degrees of reality on a descending scale right to the lowest rung. In other words, truth here is all-important, and this truth is necessarily *one*, because it *cannot be otherwise*, that is to say, because it is *unthinkable* that it should be more than one. But if truth is one, there are nevertheless several degrees of reality precisely because it is *reality* that *realizes* or brings about various effects in my thought. A way of thought still prevalent in the West could be represented by a pyramid of being, with God for its summit. Truth is one, only because in the last analysis it is the result of a judgment determined by the principle of noncontradiction (this thought process being indispensable in order to arrive at ontological truth). An "unthinkable" thing has no existence. Accordingly, "beings" are numerous, because each possesses its own particular existence that impinges on my thought in its own way; each *is* insofar as it is not the other.

On the other hand, if the principle of identity has the upper hand, degrees of reality are at once inadmissible. If such degrees were to exist, even if they were only two, they could not both really *be*, seeing that they would no longer be identical the one to the other. Being can only be one, because reality is only one. Variety belongs to the realm of thought, and thought is the agent of truth. Consequently there will exist several degrees of truth according to the depth of our speculative capabilities. The sense-world may be considered perhaps *true*, but not *real*. India's imagination depicts the world not as a pyramid of being but as a ladder of truth, at the final rung of which and yet beyond it, is to be found Being, God.²³

The Sphere of Anthropology

The particular genius of the European mind consists in its keenness of thought. Now what, in this connection, do we mean by "thought" if not chiefly the faculty of analyzing, distinguishing, deducing, in a word, the ability to employ the principle of noncontradiction? The whole development of Western thought is a process of discrimination. The emancipation of the sciences from the maternal bosom of philosophy is just one example among others. It

²³ We repeat that it is a question of primacy and not of the sole authority of one of the two principles to the exclusion of the other. India recognizes the value of the first in the same way as the West recognizes the value of the second. See, for Indian philosophy, J. F. Staal, "Negation and the Law of Contradiction in Indian Thought: A Comparative Study," in *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London) 25(1) (1962): pp. 52–71.

is not by chance that scientific and functional thought, not to mention modern technology, developed the West.

Western culture presents herself as an art of good living, well-organized, well-regulated, well-structured. Right is the measure of all things, and "prudence" is the highest of virtues. One could speak of *panjuridicism*. People know what they want, and what they know all is "cut and dry."²⁴ The Aristotelian "final cause" reigns supreme in the sphere of anthropology, but it would be false to interpret utilitarianism as being merely materialistic. The American stress on "purpose in life" is certainly an authentic product of the Western mentality. The West could not survive without teleology, for the world is only a *κόσμος* if it has a *τέλος*. Now from God's point of view, creation cannot possibly be viewed as any sort of *τέλος*, seeing that the existence of a *τέλος* other than God would thereby be postulated to which God himself would have to relate.

The problems of religious-minded Westerners are significant: Is Christ man *or* God? Is the church visible *or* invisible? Is God one *or* trine? Am I a Christian *or* a Hindū? Is this a sin *or* is it not?

The Indian position is diametrically opposed. What constitutes the greatness of the Indian spirituality is its powerful ability to synthesize, its awareness of the all, its understanding of relationships and harmonies pertaining to the whole, for situations are viewed in their totality from a different, loftier perspective. Union, unity, the whole, are for India more highly cherished values than differentiation, dualism, the individual. To the question of Western philosophy, "What is the specific nature of the creature?" India's corresponding question is, "What is the common bond that unites creator and creature?"

Neither order nor organization is highly esteemed in India. She has been marked scarcely at all by violent outbursts of fury. In her view all dogma is type of restriction, all classification a mutilation. The key word for India is *panconcordism*: each has a right to his own existence in his own fashion, though there is no question here of skeptical relativism.

One could perhaps formulate some of these same religious questions as we have ventured above in the following ways: Can we not, we men, also be both man and God? Must there be a church for the safeguarding of spiritual life? Why cannot I be both Hindū and Christian simultaneously?

The Sphere of Sociology

The ideal of Western culture seems, as a consequence of what we have been saying, to consist in evoking in Man's sundry needs, while giving him at the same time the means of satisfying them. Intellectual training includes a knowledge of facts, principles, and situations; the learning of techniques; and the development of a man's faculties. The more capable one is of noting the difference between the makes of car or two posts, between a thought and a feeling, between two beings, the more cultured one will appear in the eyes of all. The man who dwells in the bosom of the all without operating at the level of distinctions is only a "primitive." For a Westerner the ideal is to see his needs supplied, his hopes realized, without loss of order and without disruption of harmony—which implies, moreover, a little self-discipline. The ideal, in fact, still remains completely that of Greek humanism. All is *good*, provided

²⁴ See Dante, *Inferno* III.94–96:

E 'l duca lui: 'Caron non ti crucciare:
vuolsi cost colà dove si puote
ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare."

that order is maintained, wealth and religion, virtue and prosperity, techniques and simple living, regard for the affairs of both this world and the next, and so on. Fulfillment of aims, harmony, moderation, order, and other similar notions are specifically European concepts.

The ideal of India is, precisely, to obtain liberation by mastering one's needs, by arriving to the point where the needs are no longer experienced as such.²⁵ As long as these needs exist, it is necessary to satisfy them. Thus, little stress is laid on much knowledge, for knowledge is regarded as of secondary importance. The ideal is not in the direction of culmination, but of simplification. Culture has nothing to do with accumulation of knowledge but with removal of obstacles, not with achievement but with cessation. In short, the goal envisaged is not a form of air-conditioning but to make Man unaffected by heat. The Hindū ideal tends not toward liberty but toward liberation.

²⁵ See, for example, *BhagP* II.2.

WORSHIP AND TIME

Behold, I am making all things new.

Rev 21:5

We are liable to misunderstand the concept of worship in Hinduism if we are not able to estimate rightly the fundamental intention of the Indian mind, as mentioned above. Therefore, before we can come to an understanding of the nature of Hindū worship, we must consider further this essential question in relation to our general theme.

Worship Is Action

The existence of worship in human life is a universal phenomenon recognized by every people.¹ Whatever its intended outcome, worship is always action. It is not something that one has nor something that simply is or exists, but something that one does: an act.

But is every act an act of worship? At this point let us be cautious, for this question has been answered by both "yes" and "no." "Secular" thought at once tends toward a negative reply. There are acts, it would affirm, that manifestly have nothing whatever to do with worship. Now, the Hindū would not, perhaps, go so far as to invest these actions with a secret or unrecognized element of worship, but he would claim that these so-called unworshipful actions are not in fact human actions at all, because through the performance of them nothing whatever is achieved, "actualized." They are sterile. Thus they are pseudo-actions, false actions, in the same way as tinsel is false gold.

What, then, according to Hinduism is necessary in order that an action may be considered as such? The identification of action and worship should not disconcert us but rather capture our attention. It means first of all that it is worship and worship alone that makes an action an action. We are in the process of learning what worship truly is; thus, we must now, taking a fresh tack, ask ourselves in what a true action consists.

Everything depends upon what criterion is selected. If our criterion is that of knowledge and awareness, then it follows that there are some unworshipful actions, namely, those that are perceptible to the senses but have no other significance. But if the criterion by which a "true" action is to be judged is a change of being, it remains for us to discover how we may

¹ See, for example, J. Cazeneuve, *Les rites et la condition humaine d'après des documents ethnographiques* (Paris: P.U.F., 1958), though the author limits himself to so-called primitive religions; see also M. Schmaus and K. Forster.

recognize such a change. Questions concerning movement and change will not assume vital importance. Aristotle and the Scholastics saw in each movement an ontological change. For "modern" philosophy, and more particularly for the science of today, the movement with which they are concerned is neither an increase nor a decrease of being, but rather pure relationship of a quantitative sort that has reference to some point of departure or other. For Indian philosophical thought, the question of change is all-important.² If Aristotle can be said to have sought a middle way between Heraclitus and Parmenides, living Hinduism equally has followed, though differently and not always in the realm of the philosophy, an intermediate path. Movement is studied, certainly, from the standpoint of metaphysics, but not from the standpoint of ontology—that is to say, with reference to a mutation of being. Movement is connected with being, but only with the envelope, so to speak, of being.³ True movement—in other words, authentic action—consists precisely in revealing and in uncovering being, without, however, actually touching being, the heart of being, nor modifying it in any manner.

Consequently, by "action" must be understood that which effects a liberation of this sort. Movement is not change and thus true action, if it does not uncover, reveal, being. Authentic action is thus the act of worship, worship being that act par excellence that motivates being, or to use other terms, recognizes it, reveals it, discovers it, lays it bare.⁴

This explains the generally recognized fact that not only is the ordinary person unauthorized to perform a sacred act; still more, he is unable to perform it. Only the initiated has the power of triggering a real action. The same action performed by an ordinary uninitiated person would have no efficacy, would be ineffective, that is to say, null and void, somewhat as if one were to write on water or on a typewriter without a ribbon. Nothing would come of it. It is necessary for the *dikṣita* to possess the requisite power, that he be consecrated, set apart from other men, from things, even from himself. We must to a certain extent be already absorbed by the divine in order for his action to possess real value and to have an effect that will be both transcendent and immanent.⁵ It is necessary that he be, in his inner being, a mediator, a priest,⁶ for only thus will his action be real and effect what it intends: worship is always sacramental.⁷

Now, we cannot disregard the fact that plenty of ordinary human actions do not bring about a revelation such as we have described, neither theoretically certainly, nor even psychologically and hence consciously. The essential feature of authentic action is not that we should

² See T. R. V. Muri, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), pp. 55ff.

³ See *BSBh* I.1.4.

⁴ See the Indic concept *apurva*, as-yet-without-existence, beginningless, new, without precedent, incomparable, etc., an epithet used to express the unfathomable efficacy of every ritual act. *Apurvakarman* is the sacrifice whose result is unpredictable.

⁵ See *Apastamba-śrauta-sūtra* (ed. R. Garbe), X.11.5ff.; *TS* VI.1.1.3, quoted by H. Hubert and M. Mauss, art. cit., pp. 47ff.

⁶ For this reason, the "universal sacrifice" of Hinduism can only be performed by a *Brahman*, and only the three higher castes have the right to sacrifice.

⁷ The priest, when sacrificing, "passes from the human world to the divine world," says *SB* I.1.1.1, and "I return among human beings," he says after the offering (ibid., I.1.1.7). See moreover the private letter of O. Casel: "On entering (through the mystery of the Eucharist) into the death of Christ we leave this world with the dying Christ and enter the kingdom of God, in company with the risen Christ; we are no longer in this world, but in the *Pneuma*" (*Lettre d'automne de L'abbaye Ste. Croix de Herstelle [pro manuscript]*, 1948, p. 32, quoted by B. Neunheuser in his Preface to *Opfer Christi und Opfer der Kirche* [Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1960], p. 9).

"know" that it rids the being of its impurities and superfluities but that it does so in reality. On the other hand, this "thing" that is changed by means of a true action must not be beyond the reach of the spiritual element in Man, but must be of such a sort that is recognized as action in the normal understanding of the word. This brings us to the following observation.

Time Is the Basis of All Action

Action involves change. An action is only an action when it manipulates something, that is to say, when it entails modification. We are here led back to the same thought as in the preceding section.

Action, in this world of ours, involves change, and the most simple, fundamental change is that of time. A change that does not involve temporal change is not recognizable as such. A change that is imperceptible does not exist as far as Man is concerned.

Furthermore, no change is possible even in this world without the passage of time. Temporality is one of the constitutive dimensions of that form of being that moves and is subject to change.⁸ Temporal change, however, does not consist of a fluctuation that leaves being unaffected. It is a specifically sacred and hence real change. All human actions are actions insofar as they are acts of worship, and they are so when they bring about temporal change. But to bring about a temporal change means, precisely, to bring a "being" closer to or make a being more distant from its origin, not in terms of space and time, of course, but in terms of a closer or less close unity with being. Time, we may say, is the cloak of being, the wrapping that must be undone, the curtain that must be drawn in order that we may penetrate into the holy of holism, the *garbhagṛha*, the temple of being.

Some acts can scarcely be really and truly called human (moral Scholasticism makes a distinction between human acts, *actus humanus*, and the acts of Man, *actus hominis*). These latter are all those that modify time only imperceptibly or whose temporal element is merely illusory.

All this stands out more clearly if we reverse the above-mentioned principle, which makes time a necessary condition for authentic action—namely, without action there is no change, without time no transformation, and affirm also that without transformation there is no time and without change, no action: action being by definition the cause of all change and time the condition of transformation. Without time there may perhaps be difference but not dynamic change, for change is itself inherent within time. Here, at last, emerges the connection with worship.

Worship is that act that lifts the curtain of time. But the relation is reciprocal; no time, no worship. If worship ceases to be performed, time ceases to exist. This brings us to our final point in this action.

Time Both Springs from and Dies through Worship

We have endeavored by means of abstract concepts to describe something that it would have been easier to communicate by myth or symbol, if we had the key of supra- or preconceptual knowledge. Worship is authentic, true action. Action is action by virtue of the very fact that time elapses in it or through it. It is at this point that there is to be observed within

* "To Time all 'beings' owe their birth. Through it they develop and in it they go to rest. Time has a form [*murti*] but it is not one itself." Literally: Time (is) a form without form [*Kalo murtir amurtiman*], *MaitUV*1.14.

religions a certain shift or reversal of values in accordance with the requirements of each. Viewed from *below*, this action in accordance with the ontic flow of time might be termed an act of worship. Religions, however, always survey the scene from *above* and reverse our strictly philosophical points of view. Hinduism, as we shall see, has recourse to this inversion in the framing of its propositions. In other words, it presents a concept that is the reverse of that which is presented to Man's normal way of thought. An act of worship is, precisely, one that determines the course of time. Time emerges from worship, and the world pursues its course in time for the very reason that worship creates time or rather brings the world into being with respect to time. This, however, is only one of the aspects of this metaphor. Worship produces time. Yet time is more real the less temporal it is. That factor of time that makes it what it is—its "timeness," increases proportionately as its duration diminishes. In other words, the time that adheres to things is the coefficient of their unreality because it is the measuring rod of their distance from being—that is, from their ultimate nontemporal goal. The less things are temporal, the more they are real. Time makes things exist, but as long as it lasts, it does not give them subsistence. The more time dwindles, the more room there is for being. Worship "produces" time, as long as it lasts—that is to say, as long as all things are as yet not despoiled of their temporality. When it has brought time to birth it abolishes it, in order that being may appear. It is time, in this world, that causes things to appear. "It is the revealer of all beings."⁹ Time will continue to exist just as long as it is necessary for things to succeed in divesting themselves of their temporality. The world exists as long as it still possesses time, that is to say, until this latter is exhausted, annihilated. Worship permits the world to continue in existence by seizing it, so to speak, from the talons of time and thereby freeing it; in other words, creation will continue in being until the number of the elect is complete.¹⁰ But this number is already determined along with the temporal structure of the world. It springs from the earth.¹¹ The *atman* is the bridge that links time and eternity.¹² It is the *atman* that must be cherished because its nature is supratemporal. Now it is this supratemporal element that worship claims to liberate by withdrawing it from its terrestrial "sheath" in order to transplant it into the world above.

It seems as if a double process is taking place in which, on the one hand, worship brings time into being, because it enables things to follow their temporal course, and on the other hand, it annihilates time, because it challenges the aging process in things, snatches time from them and also delivers them from *samsara*, from their earthy character.

As a help toward understanding, we may add that there is in truth no such "thing" as time.¹³ The concept of time is already an abstraction, a product of thought, reached by a

⁹ See Guāḍapada, *Māṇḍūkya-karika* I.6.8 (the commentator on the *Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad* certainly does not concur in this opinion).

¹⁰ See Dt 32:8 and the traditional interpretation of the Septuagint.

¹¹ See Isa 45:8 (Jer 33:15) and its liturgical application in Advent.

¹² "There is a bridge between time and eternity; and this bridge is *atman*," is the free version of J. Mascaro (*A Star from the East* [Barnet: Stellar Press, 1954]), CU VIII.4.1. This is a reference to the bridge of immortality (*MundU* II.2.5) that separates the two worlds (*BU* IV.4.22) but which is able to be crossed by sacrifice (cf. *setur ijananam*, *KathU* III.2). A study on this "bridge theology" in Hinduism would be fruitful and profitable, even with a view to the Hindu-Christian encounter. Too often nowadays, Hinduism is presented as a purely idealistic doctrine.

¹³ When, for example, it is said that "Time engenders all that has been and all that shall be" (*AV* XIX.54.3), we regard it as a personification, just as when we said just now that worship engenders time, i.e. temporal things in their existential temporality, cf. *ibid.*, XII.53.4–5, the *Hymn to Kala* (time, creator of the world).

process of reflection upon temporal things or upon the evolution of the world. We are struck immediately by the change that happens in things—for which, we reckon, there must be some cause. Now this causality seems to us to be polarized in two different directions: God and time, and Man and time.

God and Time

God—or the Gods, the Absolute, or the supernatural (there is no need for our present purpose to distinguish)—is the cause of the world.¹⁴ He confers existence upon things. Equally, he permits them to be transformed, to move, to change. Now, as time is not to be regarded as a substance, religious thought never dissociates things and time, for religious thought confines itself to temporal things that are continually emerging from God and owe to him their temporal existence.¹⁵ It is by creation that everything began, but this beginning is reproduced at every beginning. Every change is a fresh beginning and thus a new creation;¹⁶ the same applies to God, whose eternity is a perpetual newness.¹⁷ In other words, the world, being God's handiwork, comes from him and returns to him,¹⁸ God himself being the instigator of this return.¹⁹

"He alone is time inexhaustible"²⁰—which means that he, being the author of things, is also "the author of time."²¹ It follows that it is God who is the author of change, of the passage of time; furthermore, things only move and change insofar as they return to God as to their origin or fulfillment (even if this fulfillment consists in destruction²²). Their movement is of necessity a coming closer to the goal, or it is nothing at all. Action, insofar as it is real action, is an imitation, and, as far as it is temporal action, is a journey toward God.²³ Time may be a norm of measurement of movement, and movement may be termed a relationship to the motionless and thus, in the final analysis, to God. By movement, therefore, we mean approach to God or estrangement from God. Cyclical movement proceeds in a spiral that tends toward God or emerges from God; any movement other than one of these two is merely illusory.

After what has just been said, it becomes evident that God is not only the author of time but also and equally its destroyer.²⁴ God, by destroying time, permits the world to approach him. In the eyes of the Hindū the twofold divine activity of creation and destruction does

¹⁴ See *BS* I.1.2.

¹⁵ This is true for the strictest Vedantic monism also, by which *brahman* is regarded as the cause of *avidyā*.

¹⁶ See the well-known *punah, punah*, "again and again," of the creative action of God (*BG* IX.8). "Time is creation in the making" (C. Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque* [Paris: Cerf, 1953], p. 42).

¹⁷ "He is called the Eternal, though ever new!" *AI'* X.8.23.

¹⁸ This remains true, even when the return is interpreted in terms of *pralaya* [destruction].

¹⁹ God must be named He "in whom the beginning of the world and its end unite," *SU* IV.2. See *MaitU* IV.6; *BG* X.32.

²⁰ *BG* X.33.

²¹ See *brahman* as *kala karo*, *SU* VI.2; cf. also VI.16.

²² This is so even if one postulates an indefinitely prolonged cyclic evolution of the world. At each *kalpa*, there starts a new period of time, because a new world emerges from the initial base.

²³ See Aristotle, *Physics* IV.11.219b.1: ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον.

²⁴ "The Lord said, 'I am Time, the powerful destroyer of the world'" (*BG* XI.32). M. Eliade in his chapter "Symbolismes indiens du temps et de l'éternité" translates very aptly, "I am Time who, in my course, destroy the world" (*Images et symboles* [Paris: Gallimard, 1952], p. 96).

not resemble an unworthy, irresponsible game (*lila* is something quite different from this²⁵), but consists, precisely, in the purification within time of the whole universe as well as the evaluation of it at the end of time.²⁶

It would be outside our present purpose to recall to mind the fact that these ideas are also to be found elsewhere than in India,²⁷ even, for example, in Israel²⁸ and in Christianity.²⁹

Man and Time

From another point of view, we may say that Man also becomes an author of time for he can excite change, movement. This is confirmed in experience. Moreover, if changes and passing moments are what we say they are, namely, divine and eternally new creations, and if Man holds in his hands this power, then Man must be an instrument of God with the capacity of cooperating in the return of things to their source.³⁰ In other words, true human actions are those that create time, awaken things, cause beings to advance toward their appointed end. This, precisely, is what worship is: the theandric action in which Man and the divine collaborate for the continuance of the world, the effective restoration of the mesocosm to the divine whole or, better, its transformation into him.

Whether the process is considered as cyclical or infinite, whether the end consists in a dissolution or whether by the regeneration of time and the rebirth of "beings" is simply meant a transcendence of the illusory nature of the world, worship in each case retains its identity as the theandric act that leads Man to salvation and the whole world to its goal, however this latter may be conceived.³¹

By worship, Man contributes toward the conservation of the world, its unailing perpetuation; he cooperates in the act of creation. But in so doing he, equally, destroys time, abolishes it, and "unseats" by the same "throw" the entire creation in such a way that the uncreated primordial unity is restored. To be free from the grip of time constitutes one of

²⁵ See, for example, Indian traditional commentaries on *BS* II.1.33. See also Gauḍapada, *Māṇḍūkya-karika* I.6.9, and the commentaries of Śaṅkara; also *BG* IV.6; *Radhā-upaniṣad* 3; *BhagP* X.29.1, etc.

²⁶ See *RV* I.164.11; *AV* X.8.4 and 39–40, etc.

²⁷ See H. H. Schaefer, "Der Iranische Zeitgott und sein Mythos," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Leipzig) 95 (1941): pp. 268ff.; H. Zimmern, "Zum babylonischen Neujahrstfest," *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Philologisch-historische Klasse* (Leipzig) 58(3) (1906): pp. 126ff.; 70(5) (1918): pp. 1ff., etc.

²⁸ See the interpretation of Gen 1:1 not in the sense of "absolute beginning" (in the beginning) but in the sense of "in a beginning" (for *bereshit* has no article), in C. Tresmontant, *Études de métaphysique biblique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1955), p. 72. "In Hebrew the word *olam* means both time and world" (ibid., p. 73). See Eph 2:2: κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. On *ayin* and *olam*, see E. Bonveniste, "Expression indo-européenne de l'éternité," *Bull. de la société linguistique* (Paris) 38(112) (Paris 1937): pp. 105ff.

²⁹ See, for example, passages of St. Augustine on the creation of time—e.g., the production of temporal beings. See also the whole theory of the sacrifice of the mass in Christianity.

³⁰ "If the priest did not offer the fire-sacrifice each morning, the sun would not rise" (*SB* II.3.1.5).

³¹ "One cannot overemphasise the tendency observable in every society to restore 'that time' the mythical time, the Great Time. For this restoration is the end product of all rituals and meaningful rites without exception. According to van der Leeuw, 'A rite is the repetition of a fragment of primordial time.' And 'primordial time serves as a model for all times. That which happened once is repeated endlessly. To understand the myth is enough for comprehending life'" (M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions* [Paris: Payot, 1939], p. 338). The quotations are from G. van der Leeuw, *L'homme primitif et la religion* (Paris: Alcan, 1940), pp. 120–21.

the major goals of classical Hindū spirituality.³² Just as Īśvara escapes from the limitation of time,³³ so every man who desires to reach perfection—that is, to come to a true and final fulfillment—needs to transcend time.³⁴ Only in this way, Man may not only reach his own final bliss but also insert himself completely into Reality. This is, however, not an individual but a cosmic process, in which the task and role of the personality are vague, though not for that reason abrogated. Salvation consists in true, absolute freedom, in deliverance from subjection to time.³⁵

Whatever may be said about spiritual ways or techniques for attaining this goal,³⁶ two fundamental actualities remain: namely, perfection, a mode of existence beyond time, and worship, the indispensable existential springboard for reaching this existence.³⁷ It is not surprising, perhaps, that magic is a constantly lurking danger and one that increases in proportion to the superiority of the object.³⁸

Our question has not been given adequate perspective.³⁹

³² See the *jivan-mukta*, the liberated soul, one of the principal concepts of Hinduism.

³³ Patajali, *Y'S* I.26.

³⁴ For the spirituality of *yoga*, see *Y'S* I.2.52 and the commentary of Vācaspati Miśra, *Tattva-Vaitaradī*; cf. also the *Kalacakra Tantra* quoted by M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, p. 113.

³⁵ See *AV* X.8.44.

³⁶ See the discussion between J.-A. Cuttat and R. Panikkar in *Kairos* 1 (1959) and 1 (1960) on the article by the former titled "Vergeistigungstechnik und Umgestaltung in Christus."

³⁷ "When one worships time as if it were Brahma, it escapes" (*MaitU* VI.14).

³⁸ See the discussion between P. Hacker and R. Panikkar in *Kairos* 4 (1960) and 2 (1961), on the article by the former titled "Magie, Gott, Person und Gnade im Hinduismus."

³⁹ See, in addition to works already mentioned, J. Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958); E. Castelli (ed.), *Tempo e eternità* Archivio di Filosofia 1 (Padova: CEDAM, 1959); M. Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1957); and Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour. Archétypes et répétition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949); A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1947); T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Time and Timeless* (Madras: Upanishad Vihar, 1953); S. Madhvatircha, *The Concept of Time in Indian Philosophy* (Ahmedabad: Vedant Ashram, 1951); W. T. Stace, *Time and Eternity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), etc.

THE THREE PHASES OF HINDŪ WORSHIP

I am not finding fault with your sacrifices.

Ps 50:8

It is unquestionably a difficult task to recapitulate a period of at least forty centuries, all the more so since India, and above all Hinduism, does not, despite all appearances to the contrary, present the phenomenon of a monolithic unity. We would like, however, to try to trace the evolution of the idea of worship in Hinduism. It should be remembered that our study is primarily philosophical and theological in character, rather than a strictly historical inquiry.

We shall therefore refrain from taking into consideration certain very important religious manifestations of India such as Jainism, Buddhism, and other branches belonging to the same trunk and shall attempt rather to discover the still-living roots of this mighty tree, in order that we may see how the sap they contain may serve to revitalize the religious condition of our time. For this reason, this work does not adopt the classical approach of religious history so much as develop a theological method in accordance with its particular objective.

Our study does not regard religion as a lifeless entity, access to which is only obtained by the use of reason; it asks rather for an attitude of reverence, even a believing—that is to say, religious—attitude, which alone will prove able to cause living truth to shine forth. Our reflections take for granted a certain knowledge of Indic culture, but moreover they also presuppose a sincere and lively interest in the spiritual condition of our contemporary world, which can find its salvation in religion. That religion must be a religion of truth, tailored for our time—that is to say, universal, without, however, failing into syncretism.¹

The Vedas and the *Brahmaṇas*—*Karma-marga*

Worship, as we have seen, leads to the discovery of the real, to the revelation of being. But how is one to come to this discovery? What is it that lifts the veil of illusion? "Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality."² This much-quoted text is not in the first instance a personal prayer or a personal longing but rather a

¹ See a remarkable document, "The Present Impact of the Great Religions of the World upon the Lives of the People in the Orient and Occident," published by the congress of Pax Romana, UNESCO, Manila, June 2–9, 1960, and presented without mention of place or date. See *Les grandes religions face au monde d'aujourd'hui* (Recherches et débats du Center Catholique des Intellectuels Français, 37) (Paris: Fayard, 1961).

² BUL3.28.

priestly rite that attains its goal.³ According to the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* Man is born three times over: first from his parents, next from the performance of sacrificial worship, and finally at his cremation.⁴ Now, the first phase of Hinduism, which is generally called brahminism, acknowledges that worship reaches its goal by means of a burst, an explosion, and not by means of an evolution or steady progress.⁵ Worship is not only prayer, feeling, or knowledge; it is action that eliminates duality and annihilates dissimilarity. It is, essentially, a sacrificial act, an earth and a becoming, a death. The discovery of unveiling, of which we have been speaking, consists in this rupture or destruction of the old, decaying order. Worship is that which "causes to exist"; it removes for us the "ex" from the "sist," in order to place us in a *στάσις* where existence has, properly speaking, no more meaning for us. The man whose center is outside himself, whose center is God, from whom he takes his origin (ex-), recaptures the primordial plenitude in the act of worship. Worship bridges the gulf between different planes of existence and permits access to a higher sphere.⁶

The plane of earthy realities and hence of the life of Man is simply a reflection of the divine reality. The means of access to the latter is conversion, ontological conversion, with a view to the fact that the situation here on earth is reversed, as in a mirror.⁷ Man must follow the example of the Gods and say, "I must act thus because the gods have done so."⁸ "Just as the Gods did, so now do men do."⁹ This imitation of the supernatural world is, however, an imitation by reflection, as numerous texts aver.¹⁰ The way is a way of negation, for "everything that is human militates against the success of the sacrifice,"¹¹ and the Gods' "no" is Man's "yes."¹²

³ See *ibid.*, the entire text.

⁴ *SB* XI.2.1.1: "Man in truth passes through three births: born in the first instance from his parents, he is born a second time in the fire which we offer and a third time when finally, being dead and burnt upon the pyre he is born again from his own ashes. Thus, one may say that he is born three times."

An ancient Russian song runs as follows:

Our first mother, the holy mother of God
our second mother, the damp earth,
our third mother, the one who takes upon
herself the pain of child-birth.

Quoted by P. Hendrix, *Die Ikon als Mysterium*, in the collection of essays dedicated to the memory of O. Casel, *Vom christlichen Mysterium*, p. 191.

⁵ See *JaimB* I.17: "There are two maternal bosoms, that of the Gods and that of men. For there are two worlds, that of the Gods and that of men; the wide-spreading fire (*ābhavaniya*, which of the three ritual vedic fires is the one which constitutes the gateway to the world divine) is the bosom of the Gods, the world of the Gods" (quoted by H. Zimmer, "Tod und Wiedergeburt im indischen Licht," *Erano Jahrbuch* 7/1939 [Zürich: Rhein, 1940], p. 265).

⁶ "Each day the sacrifice is offered, each day the sacrifice is accomplished, each day it links afresh the offerer to heavenly existence, each day the sacrificer penetrates the heavens [*svargam lokam gachati*]" (*SB* IX.4.4.15).

⁷ This idea is observed even in the smallest details; thus the brahminial cord is placed over the left shoulder because the Gods wear it on the right. See P. Mus, p. 51.

⁸ *SB* VIII.5.1.7. See also VII.2.1.4: "We must do that which the Gods did in the beginning"; VII.3.2.6; etc. See also other texts cited by S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1898; 2nd ed., Paris: P.U.F., 1966), p. 85.

⁹ *SB* I.5.3.23.

¹⁰ See S. Lévi, *op. cit.*, pp. 85ff.

¹¹ *SB* I.2.2.9.

¹² *AB* III.5.19, quoted by S. Lévi, *op. cit.*

Of India's three classical ways of salvation, the one that brahminism stresses the most clearly is the way of action, that is to say, *karman-marga*. In this context, *karman*, a word that is already densely packed with meaning and that in time will assume a number of other meanings also, has undoubtedly the sense of action,¹³ but as we have seen, this "action" refers to the act of sacrifice, of worship. It is this, precisely, that is *karman*. The action that is neither creative nor redemptive is not karmic action. Man attains salvation through worship, and this worship can only be sacrificial, because it is sacrifice alone that can bring about the necessary conversion. *Karman* is worship, and the *marga* is sacrifice. The only way to attain salvation is through sacrifice, for salvation is only reached by means of a breakthrough—a leap onto the other shore, or if we prefer to use other terms, by an elevation into the supernatural order. It is only by sacrificial worship that Man can be saved. Without it he is powerless, at the mercy of lower powers.

The idea of *karman* contains within it an interesting development, the course of which is not possible for us to trace just now, though we will nevertheless mention one single point that touches closely the subject of our inquiry. It is of real importance to highlight the sacrificial character of *karman*, for, even within India, tendencies are to be observed under European influence to relegate religion to the sphere of morals and to find in *karman* a simple summing up of merits or demerits, earned by good or bad conduct. Now, all specialists in the Hindū religion will admit that this assimilation of religion to morals, together with its consequences, is foreign to true Hinduism and, on the whole, to all religion. Besides, one cannot appropriate this interpretation of *karman* from the spirit of Western Puritanism where it originated, just because Hinduism itself presents undeniably the danger of a complete separation between morals and religion.¹⁴ The presence of danger in one direction does not justify us in rushing off at a tangent in the other. Religion is, essentially, worship. Now, worship does not mean a dead, empty ritualism but a dynamic ontological intercourse with the world of the divine. Of this truth, genuine Hinduism, and particularly the first phase of it, has never lost sight.

The history of religions is far from being unanimous concerning the genesis of the doctrine of *karman*,¹⁵ but amid a variety of opinions on this subject, two conclusions appear to be certain. First, *karman* originally had nothing whatsoever to do with the theory of the transmigration of the soul.¹⁶ Whatever opinions there may be concerning subsequent births upon this earth, the contents of the *karman* idea spring from an independent source, peculiar

¹³ "What, then, is *karma*, if not that condensed, temporal existence which possesses such a high degree of ontological density that it transcends individuals? Through the law of *karma* the past returns into the present and human solidarity discovers a historical ontological link" (R. Panikkar, *Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr* [Weilheim: O. W. Barth, 1963], p. 60).

¹⁴ See, for example, the documentation in S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults as Background of Bengali Literature* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946; 2nd ed., Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962).

¹⁵ See S. M. Dasgupta, *Philosophical Essays* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1941), p. 225.

¹⁶ Over against A. A. Macdonnell (*A History of Sanskrit Literature* [London: Heinemann, 1900], p. 387), S. M. Dasgupta, loc. cit., and other authors who find no trace of the idea of transmigration in the Vedas. R. D. Ranade (*A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* [Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1926]) sees evidence of the whole theory in *RV* I.164.1ff. S. Radhakrishnan (*The Principal Upanishads* [London: Allen and Unwin, 1953], p. 115) finds first indications of the theory in *RV* X.16.3; *SB* I.5.3.4; *X.3.3.8*. In the Upanishads the doctrine of transmigration is unambiguously affirmed, but the identity of that doctrine with the initial theory of *karman* remains to be proved.

to itself.¹⁷ Moreover, it is quite probable that it is immediately after worship loses its position of priority that we begin to witness the appearance of the theory universally known as the theory of transmigration.¹⁸ If sacrifice is no longer capable of saving Man or of delivering him from the clutches of time, then let him be given another chance in the course of a new earthly existence.¹⁹ Second, *karman* signifies action, not only etymologically²⁰ but also intrinsically and—what's more—it signifies an act of worship or sacrifice, for worship was identified with sacrifice.²¹ *Karman* means sacrificial action.²²

We must draw here a distinction that will throw light on the question before us. *Karman* may be understood either as the law of *karma*—that is to say, the order that controls the dynamism of creation. The law of *karma* reflects the Indian concept of universal causality²³ and aims precisely at changing the world within the framework of a well-ordered cosmos.²⁴ The nature of *karman*, on the other hand, embodies the Indian concept of contingent being. In India herself, opinions are divided on the subject of the nature of *karman*, but it is generally acknowledged that *karman* and *saṃsara* are inseparable. *Karman*, whatever its intrinsic nature, is that which constitutes the created world, that which distinguishes us from the world of Brahman, that which is intimately linked to the temporal and which must be transcended in order that "beings" may reach, purely and simply, "being" or, better, in order that they may "be."²⁵

What is the outcome of these reflections? That the *karma-marga* of this period is neither magic nor sheer activism (in the "modern," desacralized sense of the word). It is, on the contrary, a way of sacrifice and worshipful action in agreement with a particular ontological and religious way of thought. Even the ordinary person of our day well understands, when

¹⁷ See S. Lévi, op. cit., p. 11; and by the same author, "La transmigration des âmes dans les croyances hindoues," *Annales du Musée Guimet* 16 (1904): pp. 85ff. H. Zimmer, *Tod und Wiedergeburt im indischen Licht*, pp. 151ff.; A.-M. Boyer, "Étude sur l'origine de la doctrine du *samsara*," *Journal Asiatique* 2 (1901): pp. 451ff.; etc. See also *Erano's Jahrbuch, Vorträge über die Symbolik der Wiedergeburt in der religiösen Vorstellung der Zeiten und Völker* 7/1939 (Zürich: Rhein, 1940).

¹⁸ See S. M. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 21ff.

¹⁹ See the reference material in L. Silburn, *Instant et cause* (Paris: Vrin, 1955), pp. 48ff.

²⁰ *Karman*, as is well known, comes from the root *kr*, which means "works," to do, execute, accomplish, achieve, function, produce an effect, etc. See W. D. Whitney, *The Roots, Verb-Forms and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885); M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), relates to it the Latin words *creo*, *cere-monia*, and the Greek words *κατανω*, *κρῶσις*.

²¹ See the description of Viśvakarman (The One who makes all things) in *RI'X.82*.

²² See in L. Silburn the description of the brahmanical phase: "*karman*, the activity of sacrifice, is efficacious and absolute only if it brings about an identity between the agent; the act and the instrument." Already the *ṛṣi* of the Vedas were expressing this thought, e.g., in the conclusion to their Hymn to the *Puruṣa* (*RI'X.90*): "By sacrifice the Gods sacrificed to the Sacrifice." The *Brahmaṇa* go so far as to postulate complete identity: "The sacrificer, being the sacrifice, himself heals the sacrifice by means of sacrifice" (*SB XIV.2.2.24*). "This sacred activity thus establishes the totality and the unity of the universe," op. cit., p. 56. We shall revert to this again in chapter 5.

²³ See M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour. Archétypes et répétition*, p. 145: "Thus the Indians quite early elaborated a conception of universal causality, the karma concept."

²⁴ "The principle which governs this world of becoming is called *karma*," S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁵ A detailed study on this topic would be of great service in dispelling a number of stubborn misunderstandings between India and the West.

karman is mentioned, that it is not merely a question of an accumulation of merits. He believes firmly in the sacrificial character of the acts that assure his salvation. If human actions are "loaded" with *karma*, it means that they possess a sacrificial and salvific character.²⁶

The Upanishads and "Modern" Evolution—*Jñāna-marga*

The evolution that took place subsequently in the concept of worship is of great moment for the whole of Eastern culture and is even of considerable importance to the West, which itself has followed an analogous path.²⁷ Its beginnings are already observable in the Brahmanas. "Suppose, then," said Janaka to Yajñavalkya, "that you have at your disposal neither rice, nor milk, nor barley for performing the *agnihotra* [the loftiest, most essential, and most salvific sacrifice of all]. With what will you perform it?" Yajñavalkya replied, "With fruits or with plants of one sort or another." "But if you had none?" "Then with water." "And if water were lacking, so that you had really nothing at all?" "Even so the sacrifice could be performed by truth and in faith."²⁸ The injunction "Worship reality under the name of Brahman"²⁹ is equally valid for the first phase, that of the *Brahmanas*, as for the second, that of the Upanishads.³⁰ If one lays stress upon the real, one obtains the attitude of the former, while if one lays stress upon the worship, one obtains the attitude of the latter.³¹

At this point there commences a double evolution that constitutes, perhaps, one of the most important bifurcations in the history of mankind. The peoples of Europe followed one path and the Buddhist world the other, both streams retaining a common source in the plenitude of the most ancient vision of India. This may be adjudged one of the birth-comments of philosophy and self-awareness. The shift from the objective to the subjective, which we observe in Greece at the time of Socrates,³² also takes place here and at practically the same period. We plan, however, to confine ourselves to Hinduism and to devote to Buddhism one single paragraph.³³

²⁶ See the well-known conversation between Artabhaga and Yajñavalkya: "'Yajñavalkya,' he [Artabhaga] said, 'if the voice of the dead man goes into the fire, the breath into the air, the *atman* into space (ether) [*akāśam atma: atman* that is not to be confused here with *Brahman*], what becomes of the person [*tada puruṣo bhavati*]?' Yajñavalkya replied: 'Take my hand, Artabhaga, my friend. It is only alone that we can learn this.' The two friends went a little aside to converse together. What they were speaking about was *karman*, what they were praising was *karman*. In actuality a good *karman* produces a worthy person and a bad *karman* an unworthy [*punyo vai punyena karmaṇa bhavati, papah papeneti*]" (BU III.2.13).

²⁷ See for Old Testament references: 1 Sam 15:22; Mc 6:6–8; Jer 7:21–22; Ps 40:7–9, etc. For the New Testament we may content ourselves with quoting C. Spicq: "To this legal rectitude and outward fidelity to the commandments Jesus opposes something which is properly described as moral and which possesses a character of interiority" (*Agapé dans le Nouveau Testament*, vol. 1 [Paris: Gabalda, 1958], p. 14).

²⁸ SB XI.3.1.3–4. See the analogous situation of Azariah (Dan 3:34–45), who has no guide or prophet at his side, no holocaust or victim, no incense or fruits or the earth to offer but lays claim to the presence and ear of Yahweh just as if he had offered thousands of fat lambs.

²⁹ SB X.6.3.1.

³⁰ See S. Lévi, op. cit., p. 10.

³¹ "The world of the Gods belongs to those who know," declares, at this early date, SB X.5.4.16.

³² See W. Jaeger, *Die Theologie der frühen griechischen Denker* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1953); *Eranos Jahrbuch* 11/1944, *Die Mysterien* (Zürich: Rhein, 1945).

³³ For an appreciation of this "mutation," which took place round about the sixth century BC, see U. M. Vesci, *Dio, Uomo, Salvezza in alcuni aspetti del rivolgimento spirituale del VII–VI sec. a.C.*

The prominence accorded to worship during the Vedic era corresponds to the primacy of the ontic. *Karman* means the performance of worship. The overriding thought of brahmanical doctrine is that everything that happens happens "by virtue solely of ritual action."³⁴ *Karman* is action charged with being and capable of effecting salvation. The Buddha eliminated the ontic load of action, not primarily by the antisubstantialist content of this philosophic reflection but rather by his concern for simplification. *Karman* thus retains its meaning as ritual action but loses its heavy load of being. Only its moral content is preserved, that is to say, its efficacy for salvation. Buddhism is purely moral. Worship is purified of its gross, materialist excrescences, which sometimes border on the magical, and primitive Buddhism consists purely and simply in worship, going even so far as to refuse led philosophic refinements concerning being or non-being, *dharmā*, *karman*, this world, or the world beyond. *Karman* signifies the law of *karma* and nothing also. *Karman* is here simply *dharmā*.³⁵ Morality in Buddhism is not a means to an end, for morality is not inherent in something else, being itself the goal. It goes without saying that such a phrase should be taken *cum grano salis* or with an *esprit de finesse*, because Buddhism is a type and not a species. The whole of Buddhism is worship, for it is nothing other than the dynamic process that human life constitutes when it has become worship.³⁶

The evolution of Buddhism demonstrates a transition from ontic objectivity to pure subjectivity and thereafter to the abolition of all distinctions.³⁷ The subject, however, becomes so completely devoid of objectivity that it no longer possesses any substance. The Upanishads, equally, indicate a transition toward the subjective, but here it is toward an ontological subject that possesses in itself the requisite conditions for subsistence qua being. The mesocosm becomes a microcosm. The essential element in all sacrifices and forms of worship is no longer, as before, the entitative and objective exactitude of the rites, but the disposition of the human heart, the spirit in which the rites are performed.³⁸ The Upanishads

in *Asia e in Grecia*, Università degli studi di Roma, tesi di perfezionamento in Studi Storico-Religiosi (*pro manuscripto*), 1962.

³⁴ See C. Regamey, *Die Religionen Indiens*, in F. König (ed.), *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, vol. 3 (Wein: Herder, 1951), p. 113.

³⁵ The shift of emphasis from ceremonies to intention of the heart is a recurring theme in the famous ordinances of the Buddhist King Asoka (third century BC). See, for example, Number IX: "Men perform numerous rites when they are ill or when their children are born or get married or on the occasion of a voyage; it is good and right, certainly, that these prescriptions should be fulfilled, but rituals do not produce much fruit. Devotion [*dharmā*], on the other hand, brings forth much fruit." See G. P. Carratelli, *Gli editi di Asoka* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1960), p. 34.

³⁶ See P. Mus, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 128, etc., for the dependence of Buddhism upon brahmanism; and T. R. V. Murti, *op. cit.*, particularly the first part, pp. 3–117, for its philosophical relations with the Indic systems.

³⁷ See the following example. "A good, pious disciple, Subhuti, whether man or woman, may sacrifice his life out of love for innumerable generations as many as the grains of sand of 3,000 worlds; even so if another disciple contents himself with learning and putting into practice one single verse of Scripture and teaches it to others, then the grace and merit of this latter are by far the greater" (*Vajracchedika Sutra*, 13D [this *Diamant-sutra* forms a part of *Prajñāparamita Sutra*], quoted by D. Goddard, *A Buddhist Bible* [London: G. Harrap, 1956], p. 89). See the rather less sweeping remark of St. Alphonso de Liguori: "Oh, how much more will a conscientious monk win in one month than an ordinary person in one year with his numerous penances and prayers!" (*Considerazioni e lettere sullo stato religioso* [S.E.I.: Opuscolo II, 1932], p. 61).

³⁸ Cf., for example, the typical subjective interpretation of the Great Horse Sacrifice, the *asvamedha*, of the *Brahamaṇa* (see *SB XIII.1–5*) at the beginning of *BU I.1.1ff.* and the highly spiritual interpretation

are merciless toward old-time practices in much the same way as the prophets of Israel are toward the sacrifices of the Old Testament.³⁹

Man becomes aware of himself, as we have said; he discovers his own spirit.⁴⁰ No doubt the former teaching supported the idea that Man could reach his goal either "by meditation or by rituals,"⁴¹ or that "whoever sacrifices to the *atman* does better than he who sacrifices to the Gods,"⁴² but neither meditation nor *atman* had at that time the meaning that was accorded to them in this new period.⁴³

A whole chapter of the *Brahmasutra* is directed toward justifying the replacement of sacrifice with knowledge,⁴⁴ although it is generally admitted that these are the two options.⁴⁵ This is good proof of what we were saying just now and will say again—namely, that it is, specifically, knowledge that is considered to be the true sacrifice.⁴⁶ The act of worship implies knowledge.⁴⁷ It is, precisely, true knowledge that purifies sacrifice of all utilitarian motives.⁴⁸ There comes about, therefore, a progressive evolution:

- a. First, the ontological element assumes its plenitude of being. Worship offered by the mind is similar to external worship, because it carries exactly the same load of being.
- b. As a result of an inner dialectical process, wisdom finally emerges out of the integrated whole.
- c. A third step is achieved when wisdom no longer appears as that which integrates everything else, but as pure knowledge. Let us now examine these three stages.

The Sacrifice of the Intellect

Worship is an activity by means of which we attain our goal. Now, we are spiritual beings, and our goal is not a heaven that is to be materially appropriated but divinity itself, Brahman. Thus, the loftiest of human acts will be to identify ourselves with Brahman. This is the goal, one might even say the nature, of Indian meditation. Contemplation is the highest

given to it by Śaṅkara: "Those who have no right to perform the *śrāva-medha* will obtain the same benefits by meditating upon it." This is in agreement with *TS* V.3.12.1: "He who offers or recognizes as legitimate the Horse-sacrifice" (where it is evident that spiritual approval is as valid as the actual performance of the sacrifice).

³⁹ See Joe 2:13; Zech 7:4–6; Isa 1:11–17; 29:13–14; 58:1–14; Mc 6:5–8; 1 Sam 15:22; Jer 6:20; Ecclus 35:4; Hos 6:6; Am 5:21–24; etc. See the Psalms that extol the inner life; 40: 1–9; 50:5–15; 51:18–19. For the New Testament, see Lk 11:41–42; Mt 7:21; 9:13; 12:7; Jn 4:21–24; etc. A comparative study of biblical and Hindu texts would produce a large number of cross-references.

⁴⁰ A curious text of the first phase says, "There where existed the word, *vāc*, all was accomplished, all was intelligible. There where existed the Spirit, *manas* [we might translate as man's reflective faculty], nothing was accomplished, nothing intelligible" (*SB* IV.6.7.5).

⁴¹ See *SB* X.4.3.9.

⁴² See *SB* XI.2.6.13.

⁴³ "With the interiorisation of the vedic sacrifice the body became a microcosm" (M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortalité et liberté* [Paris: Payot, 1954]). See the "sacrifice of the breath," *prāṇagnihotra*, of the *Vaikhāṇasa-Smṛiti-Sūtra* II.18.

⁴⁴ *BS* III.4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III.4.9.

⁴⁶ See *CU* I.1.10.

⁴⁷ *BS* III.4.6.

⁴⁸ *BU* III.5.1.

activity of Man because it permits us to realize what we are. "A man becomes that on which he meditates."⁴⁹ It is said in all the Vedas that "In this life a man seeks to liken himself to God and he reaches him through meditation."⁵⁰ "Whoever knows Brahman becomes Brahman."⁵¹ Contemplation is not *knowing* a truth but *becoming* Truth.⁵² "One becomes that which one contemplates—this is the eternal mystery [*guhyam*]."⁵³ At this level, contemplation is a sort of divinization. It is in fact the worship of which the Ancients spoke, the culminating point of all Yoga.⁵⁴ The concentration of contemplation is a true Becoming.⁵⁵ The thought recurs again and again in the *Gita* that the last and final "vision" of a man, whatever it may comprise, decrees for him his place in heaven.⁵⁶ The same thing applies to Buddhism. Because nothing whatever exists, Buddhist concentration,⁵⁷ that is, *anatta* (*anatman*) meditation, is the means of liberation leading to *nirvāṇa*.⁵⁸

In summary, let us bear in mind the idea that in this first phase of development, contemplative activity consists of sacrifice and possesses therefore the sum total of the characteristics of sacrifice.⁵⁹ It is a coming-to-be, a real forward thrust, for it is a matter of leaping over the gulf which separates us from the supernatural world.⁶⁰ In virtue of this connection with the doctrine of sacrifice, the school of Vedānta considers the intuition as a grace. Neither thought nor study nor the reading of holy books is capable of giving rise to this intuition, thanks to which we are enabled not only to conceive the notion of identity with Brahman but are in fact enabled to attain it.⁶¹ Contemplation is always a dis-discovery, an un-veiling—in other words, an act of worship. We would like to stress that it is more a question here of a sacrifice "of the intellect" than an "intellectual" sacrifice in the epistemological sense of the word.⁶² In other, less Indian terms, we could say perhaps that contemplation is the expression of an excess and plenitude of being.⁶³

⁴⁹ *Tam yatha yathopasate bhavati* (SB I.5.2.20). See the way in which Śaṅkara applies this text: BUB I.3.16; II.1.2; IV.4.16–17; etc. See the *ὕψι πάντα πῶς* of Aristotle and the explanation of it by the Scholastics. Cf., for example, Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.5 (430 a 10) and St. Thomas, *De Anima*, lect. 10, no. 728ff., etc.

⁵⁰ BUB III.9.20. See BSBb I.1.11.

⁵¹ *Brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati* (MundU III.2.9).

⁵² This "becoming" must not be interpreted in an Aristotelian sense. See what we have said in the chapter "Hierarchical Structure of the All." One "becomes" what in truth one is already (beyond time).

⁵³ *MaitU* VI.34. But, as is expressly affirmed, the fire (*agni*) of the fire-sacrifice (*agnihotra*) must be accompanied by sacrificial gifts—literally on the sacrificial stones, extolled and contemplated. There is here one indivisible action.

⁵⁴ See M. Eliade, *Le Yoga, immortalité et liberté*, pp. 75ff., which will serve for a quotation.

⁵⁵ "To meditate is to become" (R. V. De Smet, *The Theological Method of Śaṅkara* [pro manuscript], Dissertation ad lauream, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1953, p. 224).

⁵⁶ See BG VIII.30; VIII.5–10; cf. also CU III.14.1; PrasmU III.10; etc.

⁵⁷ Cf., for example, *Dhammapada* I.1 and 2, in which, from the first, the principle is established that *dharma* (*dharmma*)—our whole nature—is the result of our *manas* [our thought].

⁵⁸ One could equally well invert the phrase and say: if the deepest meditation, according to *Buddha*, does not disclose any foundation nor any being, for all is in perpetual motion, it is because there is no such being or foundation.

⁵⁹ See BG IX.22, where meditation is always considered as a form of worship.

⁶⁰ "Contemplative sacrifice" is a good translation of the *dhyana-yajña* or *jñāna-yajña* of the *Gita*. See J. N. Rawson in his study *The Katha Upaniṣad* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 23.

⁶¹ See BUB III.5.1; BSBb I.4.14.

⁶² This should be forgotten each time the phrase "mental sacrifice" or "sacrifice mental" is mentioned. See C. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta* (Paris: P. Genther, 1957), p. 9.

⁶³ For this reason, contemplation must disentangle itself from all thoughts and imaginations, so

Pure Contemplation

Understood as a sacrificial act of worship, contemplation exhibits an internal dialectic that seems scarcely compatible with the twofold clarity of sacrifice. "The element of worship in sacrifice presupposes that Man is ready to recognize the negative forces, the evil, in himself, without however identifying himself thereto."⁶⁴ For the man, however, who is engaged in contemplation or who is on the way toward it as to a goal, this negative aspect no longer has any meaning and can no longer coexist with his contemplation. Reality is divine. In one way or another, this world has derived from God by a sort of dismemberment and it is by means of sacrifice that the "pieces" are put together again.⁶⁵ But one recognizes that sacrifices (in the strict sense of the term) only succeed partially in bringing about this restoration,⁶⁶ since the all can only be restored in the all; in other words, one recognizes that "to the *atman* alone must we direct our meditation, for it is in him alone that the different portions reunite."⁶⁷ All is then concentrated upon pure contemplation, which can only be reached by rejecting all dualism.⁶⁸ Viewed from the angle of intuition, sacrifice loses its original meaning. "Superior to the offering of material things is the sacrifice of knowledge,"⁶⁹ but this sacrifice of knowledge is in point of fact no longer a sacrifice. It is the perception of the *atman-brahman* identity.⁷⁰

What, then, has taken place? Let us try to get a clear idea. The Hinduism of this period has almost lost the sense of becoming, thinking that it has discovered its deceptive character. "I—the world—*Atman*" is no longer becomes *Brahman*. It "is" *Brahman*. It no longer needs to attain a goal, a completion. The ontic becoming of the first phase, that is to say, a passing over into being and hence a real divinization, is replaced by an epistemological becoming, that is to say, an acquisition of knowledge that does not constitute a divinization but rather, in an immediate manner, the plenitude of the divine state.⁷¹ It is a question only of recognizing this already existing reality.⁷² I am *Brahman*.⁷³ Sacrifice, in the restricted sense of the term, is no longer necessary for becoming *Brahman*. The whole of worship becomes worship of the *I*. There is no question even of discovery, since in fact there is nothing to discover. The most traditional Vedantic intuition is analogous, rather, to a happening, a fortuitous

that our true ground may disengage and discover itself, for the latter is something quite different from our ponderings. See the classic ἀποθέσις νοημάτων (the "laying aside of all thought") as a definition of prayer in Christian patrology. See, moreover, in accordance with the same development, the position of Christian monks of the Middle Ages in J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1957), where the compromise of humanism appears on the horizon. See the present author's contribution to the *IV Semana de estudios monásticos*, "Los monjes y los studios," *Poblet*, September 2–29, 1961, titled "El monje hindú y los studios."

⁶⁴ M. Vereno, *Von Mythos zum Christos* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1958), pp. 55ff.

⁶⁵ See *RV* X.9; *AV* X.2; *XI*.8.4–34; etc.

⁶⁶ See *BU* I.4.7. The nondifferentiation—*avyakṛtam*—of the world, which is fragmented into names and forms—*nama, rupa*—finds its unity only in the *atman*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See the excellent first translation into Latin of the Upanishad by A. H. Anquetil-Duperron, "Quisquis Deum intelligit, Deus fit" (*MundU* III.2.9). See *BU* IV.3.20ff.

⁶⁹ *BG* IV.33; *jñānaya jñāh*. See the λογικὴν λατρείαν of Rom 12:1 and the πνευματικὰς θυσίας of 1 Pet 2:5.

⁷⁰ "The sun and substance of the Upanishad teaching is involved in the equation *Atman-Brahman*," writes S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, volume 1, p. 45, but the problem is in fact less simple.

⁷¹ *Vedānta* would thus have lost an essential element of the *Veda*.

⁷² See *BU* IV.4.19; *KathU* IV.5 (or II.1.5, according to another numbering).

⁷³ See *BU* I.4.10.

finding. Nothing is either un-veiled, re-vealed, or dis-covered. It is simply a "gaze toward," a recognition of that salvation that was already, unbeknownst to myself, present. It is no longer a becoming nor a contemplation to myself, present. It is no longer a becoming nor a contemplation that involves an enlargement of being. The Vedantine vision is unalloyed *katharsis*, which only happens when the obstacles have been removed—and everything constitutes an obstacle to it.⁷⁴ There is, however, properly speaking, no annihilation, for these obstacles are not in fact real. Worship has now become Vedantine philosophy. This philosophy does not really consist in speculation of the nature of things but takes over the role of inner worship; hence its single objective: *mokṣa*, Man's salvation.⁷⁵ Its one sin is to enable the discipline to discover the *atman-brahman* identity. When this is not only believed but also seen, a man is liberated, realized, he has found salvation. This is the beatific vision.⁷⁶

It is Śaṅkarācārya perhaps who occasions the transition. If ignorance (*ajñāna*) is the root-cause of attachment to this present world⁷⁷ and if lack of knowledge (*avidyā*) is at the root of *saṃsāra*⁷⁸ and also its effective cause,⁷⁹ it is necessary to lay stress upon the acquisition of knowledge rather than on the *overcoming* of obstacle (ignorance). For Śaṅkara, undoubtedly, the goal of revelation (*fruti*) is the life-bringing and saving knowledge of brahman (God)⁸⁰ and not the merely natural knowledge of things⁸¹ of the world⁸² or of individual souls;⁸³ knowledge, however, surpasses all. His position will perhaps be clarified if we recollect the following fact: Sureśvara, the famous disciple of Śaṅkara (is he the same, perhaps, as Maṇḍana Miśra? But it is not of much importance) never received authorization from his master to write a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* of the latter, because the friends of Padmapada had vigorously accused Sureśvara of being a *karmakaṇḍin*, that is to say, a follower of the *karma-marga*, in other words, a man believing in the efficacy of rites and sacrifices.⁸⁴ No doubt the period was already acquainted with a certain formalism. Tradition again recounts how Śaṅkara, while paying attention to the denunciation and forbidding Sureśvara to write the commentary, permitted him nevertheless to edit the *varṭtika* for the *Bṛhadaranyaka-Upaniṣad* and the *Taittiriya-Upaniṣad*. Sureśvara, after all, was guilty of no error of dogma against Advaita, which teaches that *jñāna* is the sole path to liberation, to salvation.

⁷⁴ See the first verses of the *Ascent of Carmel* of St. John of the Cross :

Para venir a lo que no eres
Has de ir por donde no eres. (I.13)

"Pues todo lo natural, si se quiere usar de ello en lo Sobrenatural, antes estorba que ayuda" (ibid., III.2).

⁷⁵ See BS I.1.1 and the numerous commentaries upon it.

⁷⁶ "With that eye of yours you cannot perceive me. I will give you my eye divine [*divyam dadami te cakṣuḥ*]" (BG XI.8). See the Christian idea of the "light of glory."

⁷⁷ See Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍamāṇi*, 47. See also ibid., 50, 55, 61, etc.

⁷⁸ See Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasahasrī*, 42.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 110, in the translation of P. Hacker (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1949), note 65, who remarks in this connection that the *avidyā* of Śaṅkara is certainly this but that it is not the material cause [*upadanakaraṇa*] of the world, as it is considered by certain other Advaitins.

⁸⁰ See BSBb I.1.

⁸¹ BUB III.3.1.

⁸² See BSBb I.4.14.

⁸³ See ibid., I.3.7.

⁸⁴ See D. Venkataramiah in his Introduction to *The Pañcapadika of Padmapada* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1948), pp. xiii ff.

Secularized Knowledge

A third step remains to be taken, the one that brings Hinduism to its present position. We have already seen that the substitution of knowledge for *karman* produces the *jñāna* or second classical way of liberation.

Now at this point there enters the scene a new element that is a response to the initial position of the *jñāna-marga*. Not every person had the possibility of offering costly and complicated sacrifices. The path of knowledge, however, can scarcely be said to be easier or more accessible to the majority. In the first place it is not everybody who possesses sufficient intelligence to be capable of offering the sacrifice of the intellect, and furthermore the obligatory directions set forth by the philosophical schools for the attainment of salvation through philosophy are undoubtedly far more difficult to fulfill than all the strict ceremonial observances of the Vedic period.

It is not for nothing that the desired simplification has taken place precisely in the direction of secularization. Can salvation be so difficult to find that it requires either a highly complicated sacrifice, indeed one that is beyond Man's powers, or an esoteric and virtually unattainable knowledge? It is impossible that this should be so. Therefore, let us on the one hand secularize knowledge and on the other simplify the required action. As well as the philosophical contemplation that may lead a man to salvation, there is the ordinary knowledge that will at least deliver us from innumerable worldly vexations. The liberating aspect of philosophical knowledge is here attributed also to ordinary types of knowledge. It is a fact that in the India of today, secular and scientific education has usurped the place of worship.

The second simplification is in connection with *karman*. The action that leads a man to salvation is no longer holy action, sacred worship, but ordinary work, the simple performance of his everyday duties. Reverence for the divine is the same as reverence for Man and reverence for Man demands that each man works in his own situation.⁸⁵ Work takes the place of adoration.⁸⁶ "For the man of faith nature is never 'natural'."⁸⁷

However, knowledge and work are not yet completely laicized. Both are regarded in India as a means to salvation and contain a certain element of worship.⁸⁸

In the West no confusion is possible between the saint, the sage, the scholar, the man of science, and the specialist. In India, on the other hand, each sort of knowledge possesses its own sacred aspect and thus its value for salvation. Indian philosophy does not aim simply at explaining Man and the world; it desires equally to save both.⁸⁹ All knowledge, be it only partial, is better than a lifeless factual "knowing" devoid of existential communion. What one knows, says Vedānta, one also does; the man who knows what good is and where it is, is himself good. The man who knows the truth possesses the truth; he is sincere and truthful. If one points to daily experience in which theory is not always carried out in practice, we shall at once reply that such conduct proves precisely that if action lacks integrity, it is because it

⁸⁵ In this connection, see the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.

⁸⁶ "Work is worship," we may note, is the motto of the Engineering College of Banaras Hindū University.

⁸⁷ M. Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane*, p. 68.

⁸⁸ As corroboration of this modern idea, one can find a mine of material in the interpretation of both old-time and recent saints undertaken in the book *A Seminar on Saints*, ed. T.M.P. Mahadevan (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1960).

⁸⁹ See R. Panikkar, "Does Indian Philosophy Need Re-Orienting?" *East and West* (Rome) 7(1) (April 1957): pp. 23ff.

springs from an insincere unenlightened spirit. The fundamental difference that exists between the philosophical and even the theological concepts of the West and those of India is due above all to the fact that, in India, knowledge is never the fruit of reason alone.⁹⁰

Ways of Salvation and Hindū Devotion—*Bhakti-marga*

Within India and outside India alike, Vedic worship has often been described, wrongly, as purely and simply a sort of magic. Now this is an erroneous idea, for a man cannot discharge an act of worship without planning his faith in its efficacy;⁹¹ the meticulous observance of the externals of worship does not constitute the whole. Confidence plays a vital part, as much as the faithful articulation of the ritual text; this latter is called, significantly, "truthfulness."⁹² "A sacrifice offered with confidence is never in vain."⁹³ The best and most harmonious combination is constituted by confidence on the one hand and fidelity to the text (truthfulness) on the other.⁹⁴ This "confidence" is often simply another word for faith. It is anything but blind, however, for Man's assurance is a token of divine reliability and thus of the successful outcome of the sacrifice.⁹⁵

With the commencement of the second phase when worship began to mean the sacrifice of the intellect, the place previously occupied by confidence or trust remained, so to speak, vacant. There began to come to the fore, therefore, another means of salvation, *bhakti-marga*, the way of piety, the way of loving abandonment.⁹⁶ This aspect of religion plays some part in all the Hindū traditions, and for certain ones—in *Vaiṣṇavism*, for example—it is the most essential element of all.

In India the form of worship called *bhakti* has taken on many and varied forms, from the most subtle to the most rudimentary, from the loftiest to the most ordinary, but its core consists invariably in the total gift of self to the divinity.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ See, for example, this surprising passage: "When one believes [*śraddhadhati*], one also thinks. The one who does not believe does not think. Thus one must endeavor to get to know faith [*viśjñāsatavyeti*]. Sir, I do desire to understand faith!" (*CU VII.19.1*). See the Latin translation of Isa 7:9 (cf., moreover, 28:16 and 2 Chron 20:20): "Nisi credideritis, not intelligetis" and its interpretation in the Christian Middle Ages: "Intellige ut credas, crede ut intelligas" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 43.7.9 [*PL* 38.258]); "Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum" (St. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2.5 [*PL* 44.962–63]); "Nisi fides credat, sermo non explicat" (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 29.1 [*PL* 54.226]); "Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam," St. Anselm, *Prologion* 1 [*PL* 158.227]; "fides quaerens intellectum"; "intellectus quaerens fidem"; "intellectus est fructus fidei quae est virtus," St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* II-II, q.8, a.8, ad1; etc. The danger of fideism cannot be subverted by rationalism. For one whole school of Vedānta, faith only comes through listening to the Master (*guru*), after having fulfilled the requisite conditions. See "Fides ex auditu" (Rom 10:17).

⁹¹ See the documentation of S. Lévi, op. cit., pp. 102, 108ff., 114ff.

⁹² See *KausB* II.8, where *śraddha-deva* and *satyavadin* go hand in hand.

⁹³ *KausB* VII.4.

⁹⁴ *AB XXXII.9.4*. Literally: "Confidence and truthfulness—that is the pair best-yoked."

⁹⁵ See *TS* I.6.8.1.

⁹⁶ The root *bhaj* may have a wide variety of meanings of which the principal is probably "share in," "take part," and hence "procure," then "serve," "honor," "adore," "love." The *bhakta* is the servant of God, and *bhakti* is the gift of self to God. The word is already mentioned in the *Grammar* of Pāṇini.

⁹⁷ We possess today a considerable literature on the subject of *bhakti*. See, for example, W. Eidlitz, "Die unverhüllte Bhakti," *Hochland* (Munich) 8 (August 1956): pp. 55–58; and his works *Bhakta, eine indische Odysee* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1951), and *Die indische Gottensliebe* (Olten-Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1955).

Here our particular interest is not so much to describe *bhakti* as to seek its deep meaning as one of Man's ways of worship. While laying stress on the expression of sentiments and of love and on a certain psychological duality, *bhakti* is fundamentally based upon the idea that salvation is not dependent upon good works or upon a knowledge of the truth, but that it "happens," simply, to the man who is present to God and who allows himself to be possessed by Him. Worship here always involves action, but it is not an external act nor an activity of the mind, but above all an essentially loving activity.

When the *bhakta* adores God, gives himself to Him, he not only renounces all forms of recompense⁹⁸ but also every type of knowledge. Worship, here, is personal (thought not always personalist) love.

"He who works for me alone makes me his ideal and who loves [*madbhaktaḥ*] me, free from all attachment and aversion toward any—that man possesses me, O Paṇḍava!"⁹⁹

On the origin of *bhakti* in India, historians of religion are far from unanimous.¹⁰⁰ Traces of it are to be found in the Vedas,¹⁰¹ and it is adumbrated by certain features of the Upanishads;¹⁰² piety, devotion, worship, and direct relationship with the divine constitute one of the essential elements of the śruti. However, apart from these writings, it is the *Bhagavata-purāṇa* that gives both the form of worship¹⁰³ and at the same time the type of expression proper to *bhakti*,¹⁰⁴ that constitutes one of the principal sources of primitive *bhakti*. It is not to be considered an act of individual piety nor simply an act of collective abandonment. It is, above all, a *marga*, a path that is to be followed and climbed in order to reach the final End. The worship of the *bhakta* employs Man's most lofty powers, namely his sensibilities, his affections, and his unreserved and continual love, which make of human life a sacrifice, indeed, a true and authentic holocaust.¹⁰⁵

The *Bhagavad-gita*, which is not only the crown of Hindū piety¹⁰⁶ but also the fulfillment of Vedānta, represents a certain synthesis of the three ways. Modern interpretations are sometimes inclined to see in it simply a psychological concession dictated by wisdom, thinking that the *Gita* permits each man to choose one or other of the paths according to his own inclination, each of the three being considered to lead to the goal. This tendency reflects accurately the mentality

⁹⁸ See the celebrated *naiṣkarmya* of BG III.4; cf. also III.17–19.

⁹⁹ BG XI.55 "This is the essence of *bhakti*" (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita* [London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1953], p. 289). This, notably, is also the opinion of Śaṅkara. See also BG XVIII.54.

¹⁰⁰ Cf., for example, R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1913), pp. 3ff.; J. N. Sinha, "Bhagavata Religion: The Cult of Bhakti," in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4 (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956), pp. 146ff.

¹⁰¹ The large majority of the Vedic hymns, especially those addressed to Varuṇa, Savitr, and Uṣas, extol love and self-giving.

¹⁰² See BU I.4.8; IV.3.32; *KāthU* II.23; *MundU* III.2.3 and the whole of the *SU*, etc.

¹⁰³ "The highest religion consists in disinterested love of God. . . . Only those who prostrate themselves with love and abandon at the feet of an *Avatāra*, losing themselves in their contemplation, are capable of realising Truth" (*BhagP* I.1).

¹⁰⁴ "Numerous are the paths recommended as leading to the ultimate God . . . but the fairest of all is Love" (*ibid.*, XI.8).

¹⁰⁵ See the surprising lines of the Master of *advaita*: "Among the ways leading to *mokṣa*, *bhakti* is to be reckoned the first. The quest of one's own nature is called (not *jñāna*, but) precisely *bhakti*" (Śaṅkara, *Vivekacudamāṇi*, 31 [cf. Madhavananda, *op. cit.*, p. 12]).

¹⁰⁶ "Is by *bhakti* he knows Me, and knows what and who I truly am. So soon as he truly knows Me, forthwith he enters into Me." (BG XVIII.55)

of the present day, which is enamored of syncretism. The teaching of the *Gita*, however, seems rather to be a doctrine of synthesis. Pure inactivity is impossible.¹⁰⁷ Works alone, on the other hand, do not bring about salvation.¹⁰⁸ God, it is declared, is a nonactive Being.¹⁰⁹ Yet salvation is not to be obtained without sacrifice.¹¹⁰ The essence of sacrifice is abandonment and the spirit of detachment,¹¹¹ material offering being only secondary.¹¹² It is devotion alone that saves.¹¹³ What matters is *bhuddi-yoga*.¹¹⁴ Moreover, devotion is truth, and that is why devotion constitutes the sacrifice of the intellect.¹¹⁵ Thus notion, knowledge, and love go hand in hand.¹¹⁶ "Make Me the goal of your love and contemplation, offer Me sacrifices. Render me homage; you will enter, I assure you, into Me, for I love you."¹¹⁷

The *Gita*, however, only succeeds in making a synthesis (and not merely a syncretistic juxtaposition), because it safeguards the primacy of sacrifice—a sacrifice that must be, not a fleeting ritualistic episode, but a human act transfigured through sacrifice; act without setting your heart on the fruits of your actions,¹¹⁸ perform your actions as if they were sacrifices,¹¹⁹ for all things come into being through sacrifice¹²⁰ and it is through sacrifice that one reaches the goal—that is, true liberty;¹²¹ this sacrifice is composed of your actions.¹²²

Herein lies the deepest mystery of all: the personal relationship of love and friendship with Him, not only in spirit but in accordance with ancient *yoga*,¹²³ that is to say, in an ontological union, in a true re-ligion.¹²⁴

Anthropological Perspective

The *Gita* affords us the opportunity of setting forth the main trends in the development of worship within Hinduism. This development takes place in accordance with a process that leads from heteronomy via autonomy to ontology.¹²⁵

¹⁰⁷ BG III.4.

¹⁰⁸ BG IV.14ff.

¹⁰⁹ BG IV.13, *akartanam*.

¹¹⁰ BG IV.33.

¹¹¹ BG VI.1.

¹¹² BG IX.26–27.

¹¹³ BG IX.31.

¹¹⁴ BG X.10.

¹¹⁵ BG IV.33; BG IX.15, *jñāna-yajñena*.

¹¹⁶ BG XVIII.45; 46; 56; 57; 58.

¹¹⁷ BG XVIII.65. See also IV.3 and IX.34.

¹¹⁸ BG V.2–3; III.4 and 17; etc.

¹¹⁹ BG III.9; IV.23.

¹²⁰ BG III.10ff.

¹²¹ BG IV.23–32.

¹²² Here is the final teaching of *Gita*. See II.31ff.; III.4ff.; XVIII.56ff.; etc.

¹²³ As is known, *yoga* comes from the root *yuj*, "bind, re-bind, tie together, fasten to a yoke," etc. (See *jugum*, *yoga*, etc.).

¹²⁴ "Today I have told you the same ancient *yoga* [*yoga puratanah*].

You are the one

who loves Me [*bhakta*] and gives me his friendship [*sakha*].

This is the deepest mystery." (BG IV.3)

¹²⁵ For these ideas, see R. Panikkar, "Le concept d'ontonomie," in *Actes du XI Congrès International de Philosophie*, vol. 3 (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1953), pp. 182ff.

This process not only corresponds to three ways of perception of objects or of knowledge—(a) a perception without discrimination (heteronomy), (b) separate and independent perceptions (autonomy), and (c) the perception of internal ontic connections between certain objects (ontonomy)—but it corresponds more particularly to three degrees of awareness in the knowing subject: Man himself presents a threefold spiritual perspective. He perceives objects in various ways, because his consciousness is engaged in a personal and historic evolution. Thus it is not so much a question of an "objective" description of the "phenomenon" of *worship* as of a disentanglement of the reality of *Man*. Man conceives of worship in a particular manner, because he has a particular awareness of the all, because he has a particular world vision.

One might define this state of affairs as an evolution of consciousness and self-consciousness, starting from a global and almost completely unconscious perception and proceeding to a progressive unfolding of the reflective intelligibility of reality. However, we have not yet reached the core of the question and cannot make use of debatable principles such as would suppose the problem to be partially resolved.

This idea, for instance, of a progressive awakening of consciousness presupposes that the universe or what we may call reality with the whole of its structures and degrees is within the range of Man's understanding, or can so become, far more, it implies, if not that *esse est percipi*, at least that *esse est perceptibile*, or knowable (by means of *ratio*): it presupposes furthermore that the ultimate meaning of Man's existence on earth is not solely to exist, but to know or, in other words, to understand, and, finally, that the more one knows—and, I would add, the more that one knows that one knows—the more one amounts to.¹²⁶ Otherwise, how would one venture in practice to attribute value and even reality to that sphere of existence that is just barely known to oneself or which is even only knowable? Perhaps it is not possible to possess simultaneously consciousness and self-consciousness, direct knowledge and reflexive knowledge? The biblical account of the birth of the knowledge of good and evil is without doubt of great interest and relevance here.¹²⁷ It is only through a fall that a certain sort of knowledge becomes possible. The scientific view of nature destroys perhaps the mythical view of it and causes the "fragments" of reality (if one may use such a succinct metaphor) to be lost by this "progress."¹²⁸ If a man perceives clearly the nature of his own sacrifice, it is to be feared that it may resemble that of Cain or even that it ceases to be a sacrifice at all. If prayer is too conscious of itself, does it retain the right to be called contemplation? On the other hand, too spontaneous a worship and too unconsidered a sacrifice may well degenerate into superstitious deviations. An ontonomous line of conduct, if it is too analytical, ceases by this very fact to be ontonomous; if it is too synthetic, it never frees itself from heteronomy.

This whole evolutionary process one could call a process of coming to maturity, which, of course, does not mean merely progress. But we are obliged to restrain ourselves from going further into this question and content ourselves with a brief presentation.

¹²⁶ We are thinking here of a theory derived exclusively from depth psychology and of a purely sentimental or intellectual interpretation of what has been termed "primitive mentality," although one is bound to admit that the two theories have won great merit in the realm of the theology of religions.

¹²⁷ Gen 2:9; etc.

¹²⁸ With regard to the "modern" scientific understanding of the world, cf. O. Barfield, *Saving the Appearances* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957); C. A. Coulson, *Science and Christian Belief* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Heteronomy

At the beginning of Hinduism all was simply one. Man has an awareness, certainly, but little awareness of himself. He acts, thinks, and loves without concerning himself with the meaning of worship. It simply happens. The word *ad-oration* means little to him, for the distance implied by the prefix "ad" is unperceived by him. Worship is divine salvific action to which Man associates himself or in which rather, he participates. Worship is a divine act. Man obeys this law of the Most High precisely as he obeys the laws of nature, because he is answerable to this law just as he is to the others. He observes the precepts of worship in the same way and to the same extent as he is attentive to natural phenomena. His whole life is worship, because he is still one with the original elements that are present precisely in worship. God, the universe, and himself are by no means three distinct, well-defined "things" or beings but are, on the contrary, complementary beings, the one overlapping, as it were, the other. If a man is devout, his devotion is addressed to all things, not because he is adoring stones or the cosmos as a whole, but because he is praying in simplicity. His sacrifice is the sacrifice of his whole life; it is his very life that amounts to a sacrifice. He lives in the most complete *heteronomy* without awareness of "the other." If he were aware of his own unawareness, he would immediately have an equal awareness of the other and could no longer tolerate the weight that the continual presence of "the other" would impose upon him. Insofar as he is sincere, worship is his life. He knows himself to be implicated in this cosmic process, and his worship thus becomes a participation in the awakened consciousness of the whole process. The acts of worship and directions to be followed will describe for him only the "how." The "what" will be simply taken as real. A "why" would be either a nonsense or a blasphemy. Can a man really ask himself why God *is* or why reality exists or *in what* it consists without denying by so doing one or the other? If there is a God, there cannot be a "why" that transcends him. In God all "why," being extrinsic to God, would become the true God or true Reality. Let us not say that there must needs be a last "why" that elicits no response and is its own *raison d'être*; let us say rather that such a "why" is devoid of sense. It can have no existence any more than can a square circle. The question "why" always presupposes a "because" which, precisely, is excluded simultaneously with the "last" why. If Man were God he would never ask for a why. If he does so, it is because he is in the last resort seeking God who is the final "because"—and because he recognizes by the same token that he himself is not God.¹²⁹

It is understandable that primordial worship, in this heteronomous way of life, must needs consist in sacrifice and that, truthfully speaking, this sacrifice is a divine rather than human action. Man prays because he is compelled to, because God makes him pray. His prayer will express all manner of desires but it will not express gratitude. The distance without doubt persists, but the movement is in one direction only. There is no other self that can be the recipient of gratitude.¹³⁰ Worship is essentially the work of the Gods. Man stands in for the

¹²⁹ This was most certainly the intention of the Buddha. See for this and related questions, R. Panikkar, *El silencio del Dios* (Madrid: Marova, 1970).

¹³⁰ It is well-known that several Indian and other languages scarcely know the concept of "thank you." When a devotee makes an offering to a *sadhu* (or, in Buddhism, to a *bhikku*), these *mahatmas* neither respond by a word nor even by a gesture of thanks. Theravada Buddhism goes so far as to forbid it expressly. This is natural and the outworking of heteronomy. One must be free from the world and strangle all earthly attachments. See the reflections of the companion of St. Francis of Assisi, Brother Masseo: "Che è quello ch'ha fatto questo buono uomo [St. Francis]? . . . al vescovo [of Siena], che l'ha cotanto onorato, non ha detto pure una buona parola, né ringraziatolo" (*I fioretti di san Francesco*, chap. XI).

Gods each time that he offers a sacrifice. Everything is regulated from on high. All art is a rite.¹³¹

All this can only be faithfully expressed by means of myth and symbol. All representation through concepts is inexact, for these latter involve a transposition and presuppose a certain angle of vision. The all cannot be expressed in concepts in any adequate or exhaustive manner, although it is possible to arrive at the "essential." This, however, already involves a re-production. Further, it is only the quintessence that is thus reproduced (one does not live by bread alone). In short, all representation by concepts involves an object-subject division that brings with it the dependence of the first vis-à-vis the second. The object is dependent upon the subject or, better, presupposes a subject. Now the subject (*sub-jectum*) is, in heteronomy, not yet present. There Man is not "perceiving" reality, he is inseparably bound up with the all; he is not yet a subject (*sub-jectum*) with ob-jective knowledge; he is not capable of passing judgment. The Lord of Delphi, according to Heraclitus, neither speaks nor is silent; he indicates.¹³² It is only in symbol that the all can reveal itself, for the symbol is not merely a copy but the actual reality that is thus disclosed. The symbol is the figurative form of reality, not however in a physical sense—that is to say, as it appears to this man or that, but in the realm of metaphysics, being an ontological form by means of which reality is rendered visible.¹³³ Worship thus simply means to enter into this symbolism, take part in it, enter into its ebb and flow. It is useless to seek to understand, for all that is necessary is to exist, and one achieves integration. As soon as one seeks to understand, as soon as one notices, for example, that liturgical language is a dead and incomprehensible language (we refrain purposely from saying "has become"), as soon as the actions must be interpreted, we are passing out of the realm of heteronomy.¹³⁴ "Prius est intelligere aliquid quam intelligere se intelligere," says St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle.¹³⁵

Autonomy

One would be wrong to see in these processes only completely compartmentalized "pieces" of human development. On the contrary, they are integrated into one another and advance together. One may have, at one and the same time, an intellectual judgment that is completely autonomous and a heart that is steeped in heteronomy.

¹³¹ "We must remember that all artistic operations were originally rites, and that the purpose of the rite (as the word τελετή implies) is to sacrifice the old and to bring a new and more perfect man" A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech and Figures of Thought* (London: Luzac, 1946), p. 15.

¹³² H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1922); Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 93: "ὁ ἄναξ, οὐδὲ μαντεύϊόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἄλλὰ σημαίνει," which may be translated, "The Master of the Delphic Oracle neither utters nor conceals anything; he only gives a sign."

¹³³ See below, chapter 6.

¹³⁴ The present trend in Christianity toward finding a comprehensible liturgy, the awareness of the fact that "it is a natural right in the dispensation of grace that the people should pray in their own mother tongue in order to be able 'to sing the praises of Christ antiphonally with the officiating clergy' (Pliny to the Emperor Trajan)" (O. Karrer, "Zwischen zwei Konsilien," *Hochland* [Munich] 1 [1960]: p. 8), and also the no less understandable resistance of the conservatives who do not find the same necessity and who fear gravely the loss of the sense of mystery may perhaps be explained by what has just been said. Heteronomy soon succumbs before constraint. On the other hand, autonomy would weaken the element of sacrifice and would turn it into a congregational devotion. Ontonomy alone provides a solution, for it preserves the mystery and safeguards the divine action, guarantees to the people a right and proper participation, and offers a field of activity for their vital energies.

¹³⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 8.

It is not necessary to relate how the development of self-awareness has unfolded.¹³⁶ The whole of Western history offers us a superlative example of this growth into maturity. We desire simply to note that Hindū worship also has followed a similar evolution.

The heteronomic worship of the Vedic period professes to be efficacious, to construct or help construct the world, to participate in the theo-cosmic process. In autonomic reaction to this, the period of the Upanishads professes above all to understand. Man distinguishes himself from the all; he discovers that he is not, or is not yet, the all but that he desires to become it. Worship becomes a conscious participation in the process of liberation. "Worship reality under the name of brahman!" say the ancient texts.¹³⁷ Man, however, is aware that he can only respond to this invitation if he knows what brahman is. The sages look askance at those foolish people who do not know what they are doing.¹³⁸ The accent is placed upon "knowing," first because it is necessary to acquire oneself knowledgeably in true performance of the sacred worship, and next because there will soon come about the realization that it is knowledge that must needs perform and even replace sacrifice.¹³⁹

Symbols are no longer only "lived," but they demand to be interpreted, understood.¹⁴⁰ Their function is no longer to introduce reality or to sustain being but to be means toward knowledge. The ontic becomes ontological and, thereafter, logical. It is only at the heart of the symbol, where understanding dawns, that one recognizes reality. The self is no longer considered simply in terms of awareness of the self, but as pure and simple awareness, liberation from being. The autonomy of knowledge is going to increase little by little until it becomes pure intuition. Worship in the last instance comes to mean simply prayer.

"Modern" man, in India as elsewhere, is irritated at the sight of an "ignoramus" praying, performing an action, or doing anything at all without "knowing" what he is doing. For him, "formation" has nothing to do with "form" or "making" but implies always and ceaselessly "knowledge." "Prayer" no longer means either action or total participation or a state of uplift but, on the contrary, petition, entreaty, the conscious gaze, the scholarly meditation, and so on. As for morality, it is considered in connection not with the act but only with the intention.¹⁴¹ Vocal prayer is not to be regarded as an authentic religious action. It is simply a still permitted relic or "hangover" from outworn practices that may well be a psychological alibi to excuse one's failure in inner concentration. Even silence is emptied of its plenitude of being and is a sort of escape mechanism, a simple "nonspeaking." Furthermore, nothingness also is emptied of its nothingness and becomes a mere negation of being, pure non-being. God is to such an extent transcendence that his immanence

¹³⁶ See, among others and always supplementing him from other sources and from other cultures, A. Ungnad, "Zur Geschichte des Ichbewusstseins," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 36 (1925): pp. 269ff.

¹³⁷ *SB* X.6.3.1.

¹³⁸ See the disparagement of ritualism in *MundU* 1.2.1–11.

¹³⁹ A study in depth of the *jñānam vijñānasahitam* of *BG* IX.1 (cf. also III.41 and VI.8)—that is to say, of understanding or knowledge, accompanied by wisdom, or experience (the interpretation of it by Radhakrishna as "metaphysical truth" [*jñāna*] and "scientific knowledge" [*vijñāna*] seems to me a little debatable)—and of the parallel Christian-Scholastic concepts would undoubtedly be of great interest.

¹⁴⁰ "An outworn myth cedes its position to the forces that have killed it. And what are these latter? Nothing other than thought" (J. Bernhart, *Bibel und Mythos* [Munich: Kösel, 1954], p. 51).

¹⁴¹ The reason that Kant could attack "edifying" literature is that it had already lost in Christianity the ontic content of effecting the edification of the mystical body of Christ. The genuine "edification" of the Middle Ages was characterized by an existential dynamic that was later lost because people failed to understand the collective aspect of the enterprise. The stress was laid on knowledge, and in this perspective the mere repetition of truths already known no longer seemed to have any meaning.

appears to be just a concession. He is conceived as the altogether *Other* rather than as the *All*. Intelligibility becomes the most important sign of the absolute, and self-awareness the highest attribute of Man.

Ontonomy

In spite of idealistic and absolutist tendencies, the Indian spirit has never reabsorbed that indissoluble residue of human life and of reality that is composed of love and of matter. Instincts of a highly exuberant sort prevented it throughout. *Bhakti* and tantrism have flowered profusely despite the predominant influence of *Vedānta* and Buddhism. The idealist systems, indeed, came to the point of adopting a radical dualism, namely, a dualism of two existential orders—*paramārthika* and *vyāvaharika*—though the latter they denuded of reality.

The whole endeavor of the *Gita* is directed precisely toward giving a proper plane to love without, however, jeopardizing the rights of knowledge. Ontonomy is careful to preserve a balance between the different structures of being, and setting its face against monolithic totalitarianisms, above all that of knowledge, it disentangles from the complex multiplicity that constitutes being those inner laws that are proper to it.¹⁴²

In the context of this as yet unfinished search for an ideal Hinduism, worship is that which one may express in Western terms as a combination of *mysterion*, *contemplatio*, and *devotio*.¹⁴³

In order to define more fully the ontonomic attitude, it is necessary to go beyond the framework of Hinduism, for Man's ontonomic awareness has, sociologically speaking at least, only just begun to manifest itself in our own day. It is in fact Hinduism, confined for the most part as it is to the heteronomic position, that is now presenting Christianity, which itself is on the whole a prisoner of autonomy, with a serious incentive to go deeper and to make good its own deficiencies according to the sociological necessities of our time. Ontonomy is one of the implicit contents of heteronomy and one of the unspoken suppositions of autonomy. The dialogue of Christianity with Hinduism is now preparing to bring once more to the light of day the ontonomous kernel of true human religion. The liturgical consciousness of Christianity has itself passed through this threefold development, or better, it has now come to the point of being able to realize the ontonomic significance of Christian worship. This fact explains the universal aspect of contemporary renewal in regard to the liturgy. All this, however, would carry us outside our particular Indian theme. We will, therefore, by means of an example, give a short clarification concerning this ontonomous way of behavior.

Worship or, if one prefers, liturgy means undoubtedly "divine service." Now, for heteronomy, divine service has the meaning solely of service of (i.e., performed by) God, that divine action by which God labors to save the world and draw it to himself. In heteronomy, service "of God" is understood as a subjective genitive. Man's role is simply to participate in this work. The *opus operatum* has absolute primacy and is vested with more or less the only power of decision. There is here a certain danger of magic and superstition.

Autonomy, by contrast, understands the service "of God" as an objective genitive, that is, as service rendered to God—in other words, as Man's tribute of praise, his adoration, his work performed in honor of God. Here liturgy signifies praise; worship contains the element of glorification. The essential, it would seem, is composed of the feelings and intentions of the worshiper. Here *opus operantis* holds pride of place: the liturgy, then, consists in ceremony,

¹⁴² Admittedly Śaṅkara and Ramanuja endeavored to promote a synthesis, on the one hand, between *jñāna* and *bhakti*, and next with *karman*—as, moreover, almost all philosophers have also tried to do.

¹⁴³ We will refrain from making observations on the Trinitarian echos of this formulation.

not, of course, a merely formal and empty ceremonial of praise, for Man's praise and homage are directed toward God, the "examiner of the reins and hearts"; it is He who has stipulated how He should be worshiped, and it is He who requires, over and above an external gesture of submission, the recognition of his own greatness and of our nothingness. Yet, all this being duly acknowledged, worship is, incontestably, the service of Man to God.¹⁴⁴ The danger of humanism and rationalism will at once be evident. (What does it matter what prayer I pray, or where, whether I go to church on Sunday or any other day? Such questions have a merely disciplinary importance, etc.)

Now, for ontology divine service means simultaneously both the service of God and the service of Man. It concerns at one and the same time both God's action and Man's dutiful response. Properly speaking—and here we are using a typically Christian idea, although it (the idea and above all the actuality, for Christ is everywhere at work) can also be found in heteronomous religions—we are dealing with a *theandric action* that can only be performed either by a divine man or by an incarnate God. The *opus operantis* is a requisite of worship, and the *opus operatum* is also essential. Moreover their unity becomes patently clear if we reflect even a little on the fact that, from the theandric point of view, the two aspects coincide.¹⁴⁵ In Christian terms, that which we men call *opus operatum* is the *opus operantis Christi*.¹⁴⁶ Worship is in very truth the divine office; it is a *mysterium* that requires both *contemplatio* and *devotio*. It is that divine service that unites objectivity and subjectivity, divine action and human participation, action and intention, matter and form, the liberty of divine grace and the collaboration of Man, in one word, God and Man, Christ.¹⁴⁷ But let us return to a consideration of Hinduism.

¹⁴⁴ See J. A. Jungmann, who writes on the first page of his work *Der Gottesdienst der Kirche* (Innsbruck-Wien-Munich: Tyrolia, 1955), with the backing of 1 Pet 2:5-9: "als heiliges Gottesvolk sich zusammenzufinden und das Lob ihrer Schöpfer beginnen. Das geschieht im christlichen Gottesdienst, in der Liturgie . . . Ein Dienst im Interesse des Volkes . . . im Interesse des Gottesvolkes. . ." All this is true no doubt, but the emphasis nonetheless is on autonomy.

¹⁴⁵ See the interpretation which makes of *operans in me Deus* the first meaning of the *Opus Dei* of St. Benedict in I. Hausherr, "Opus Dei," *Orientalia Christiana periodica* 13 (1947): p. 210.

¹⁴⁶ See E. Zeitler, "Our Liturgical Programme," *The Clergy Monthly* 13(5), July 1959, p. 175.

¹⁴⁷ This is why it seems to us somewhat artificial to separate individual devotion from "liturgical" devotion, just as similarly we do not find it useful to discuss the comparative merits of individual contemplation and the liturgical office. See the replies given by Th. Merton ("Liturgy and Spiritual Personalism"), J. Leclercq ("The Liturgical Roots of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart"), C. Vagaggini ("Liturgy and Contemplation"), B. Häring ("Liturgical Piety and Christian Perfection"), etc., to Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, in *Worship* 34(9) (1960).

PRINCIPAL FORMS OF WORSHIP

Now the rock was Christ.

1 Cor 10:4

There are in Hinduism three forms of worship that correspond to the three stages that we have just mentioned and are, like them, interconnected: sacrifice, prayer, and praise. A short description of these three forms will suffice to illustrate what we have said and to reach a more complete definition of worship in Hinduism. Our intention, of course, is not and could not be to penetrate the dense forest of Indic religion nor even to explore its principal alleys. Let us content ourselves with a bird's-eye view! This may perhaps give us a better orientation than any expedition we might mount into the secrets of the forest.

Easy comparisons must, of course, be summed, but nevertheless nothing is served by concealing the very real analogies that we shall have the occasion to encounter in our study. This perspective may perhaps cause certain people to fear that the uniqueness of Christianity is endangered. Yet Christ's action dates from before Abraham,¹ and the Lord is wonderful in all his works.²

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is the principal form of worship of the classical period. All the Vedas revolve around the practice of sacrifice and this practice has been maintained to the present day.³ *Karma-marga* means, quite simply, the way of sacrifice.⁴

¹ See Jn 8:58.

² See Ps 138 (139):14, etc.

³ It is continued up to the present in Malabar. In the *Times of India* (Delhi) of April 8, 1960, there was the following notification: "Banaras, April 7, 1960. Jogiray Gurunathji, a saint from Maharashtra, has started a *yagna* here to avert what he calls 'disaster and evil the world is likely to face in 1962.' About one hundred sadhus and Brahmins are chanting *mantras* in a boat on the Ganga."

⁴ "The German word *Opfer*, meaning sacrifice, is a combination of the Latin words *offerre* and *operari*, that is to say, it contains the ideas of gift and of sacrificial action, combined however, here, in such a way as to mean not the action of offering (cf. *RV* I.1.14) but the character of a 'sacred work' (*RV* X.30.11)" (A. Closs, "Das Opfer in Ost und West," *Kairos* 3-4 (1961): pp. 154ff.

The Puruṣa

Although it is of a later date, the well-known Rig Vedic text called *Puruṣa-sūkta*⁵ supplies the most exact imagery for portraying the contents of Vedic worship. The all depicted here as the primordial man is identified with its own activity, that is to say, with sacrifice. Sacrifice is, one might venture to say, that which energizes the all. It is by means of sacrifice that the all dismembers itself—or rather, in order that the transcendence of the *Puruṣa*⁶ is maintained, one-quarter of the all is severed to form the creation. That quarter becomes eye, the sun, breath, the wind, all that exists—and then through sacrifice the creation reverts to the *Puruṣ*.⁷ The cosmogonic hymn of creation⁸ confirms this interpretation, which is henceforward the accepted one.⁹

All other sacrifices, numerous as they are, are simply a participation in this cosmogonic sacrifice by means of which the world is raised to its destination, from which also it sprang.¹⁰

"The first man, that is to say, the Person, is truly the sacrifice!" says one of the Upanishads,¹¹ following a passage of the *Satapatha Brahmana*.¹² The cosmic sacrifice is not a blind, mechanical process, nor is it a piece of magic performed by an individual human being.¹³ It is the sacrifice of the first man, the restoration of the original plenitude of Man that has been lost or dissipated.¹⁴ The *Puruṣa* of the brahmanical religious thought-world must not be turned into a philosophical system and confused with the *puruṣa* principle of *samkhya*, for the former is not only the divine prototype of Man (which is perhaps far too Hellenistic an expression), but is also divine transcendence re clothed in humanity, in other words, theandric transcendence.¹⁵ *Atman* is another way of saying divine immanence and *Puruṣa* is another word for transcendence,¹⁶ but both refer

⁵ *RV* X.90.

⁶ For a better understanding of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, one should read also the parallel texts in *AV* X.7 and *SB* VI.1.1, then *AU* I.1.1ff. and *BU* I.4.1ff.

⁷ *RV* X.121.1ff.

⁸ *Ibid.* and X.129.1ff., respectively.

⁹ "The *brahman* of the *Brahmaṇas* is the same as the *brahman* of the *Upaniṣad*; sacred knowledge is identical to its object, sacrifice, and sacrifice is the sole reality. It is both creator and the creation; all the phenomena of the universe are simply reflections of it and borrow from it their own semblances of existence" (S. Lévi, op. cit., p. 10).

¹⁰ The idea of creation as a sacrifice is common to the majority of religions. The various forms of worship all play a part in this "initial sacrifice" (V. Warnach) or "Sacrificial liturgy of creation" (A. Vorbichler) or "this mystery of the creation" (W. Schmidt). See V. Warnach, "Von Wesen des kultischen Opfers," in B. Neunheuser (ed.), *Opfer Christi und Opfer der Kirche* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1960), pp. 33ff. See also A. W. Watts, *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* (London-New York: Thames and Hudson, 1953), who, following a Hindu line of thought, seeks to restore to myth its place in Christianity: "Creation is a sacrificial act in the sense that it is God's assumption of finite limitations, whereby the One is—in play but not in reality—dismembered into the Many" (p. 51n3).

¹¹ "Puruṣo vava yajñah" (*CU* III.16.1).

¹² "Puruṣo vai yajñah" (*SB* I.3.2.1).

¹³ The interpretation of the *Puruṣa* as an individual seems to me untenable (cf. S. Lévi, op. cit., p. 77). The human person was not regarded as an individual nor as being simply the man-phenomenon.

¹⁴ "In the period of the *Brahmaṇas*, the sacrificial rite came to be regarded as a re-enactment of the primal sacrifice of the Supreme Being from which all creations and all multiplicity proceeded" (R. C. Zahener, op. cit., p. 59).

¹⁵ It is also stated in the account of the Creation (*BU* I.4.1) that when at the beginning the *atman* came to be, he had the form of the *Puruṣa*.

¹⁶ See L. Silbrun, op. cit., p. 118.

to Man. In the final analysis this immanence and this transcendence are only relative concepts relating to Man. Sacrifice is, precisely, the bridge that links the two.¹⁷ "Everything which *is* is so by sacrifice¹⁸ [is caused to participate in sacrifice]." The *Puruṣa-sūkta* proclaims the restoration of Man.¹⁹ But who can plumb the mystery of the creation?²⁰

Prajāpati-Puruṣa

This universal sacrifice possesses a double dynamism: the downward movement of the all toward the earth and also the upward movement of the world toward the all. These two aspects, however, are inseparable from each other, because the cosmic process is cyclic and in continual evolution. At each instant, time and eternity touch, and it is sacrifice that presents this encounter: "O Master of time, you are ever reborn with a new face. You advance before the dawn!"²¹ At every moment the universe is being created, just as also at every moment it is returning to its source. The next instant it is fresh once again, but carries not before declining in its turn. Each new world is the product of sacrifice. Death "is in truth the end, the year,

¹⁷ See *SB* XIII.6.6.11, where it is said that "with the aim of acquiring possession of all [the universe?] the *atman* of the one who offers the sacrifice penetrates into the sacrifice of the person (*puruṣa-medha*), for the sacrifice of the man [*puruṣa-medha*] is everything."

¹⁸ *SB* III.6.2.26: "Creatures who take no part in sacrifice have lost everything" (*ibid.*).

¹⁹ H. Heras (*The Regeneration of Hinduism [pro manuscript]*), pp. 142–53) reads the sacrifice of Christ into the hymn of the *Puruṣa* and the hymn of the creation.

²⁰ The famous hymn of creation in *RV* X.129 is today found in excellent translation. As it is less known and yet remarkable, we would like to give here the Latin translation of C. B. Papali, *Hinduism*, vol. 1 (Rome: Libreria Gentes, 1953), pp. 25ff.:

1. In illo principio ens non erat nec non-ens,
Immensi caeli non erant nec atmosphaera vasta.
Quid tunc erat in cujus visceribus clausus
totus hic mundus jecit? Abyssusne aquarum?
2. Mors non erat, immortalitas nulla
Caliginem nox nec lucem tunc noverat dies:
Illud tamen unum a seipso sine habitu spirabat,
Praeter Illud Unum uequaquam aliud fuit.
3. Caligo primum claigine stabat velata,
indistinguibile totum, abyssi aquarum
Illud Unum, cui ortu vacuum velamen praebebat,
impetu magno fervoris tunc exsurrexit inde.
4. Velle, quod germen est mentis, Illud primum invasit,
in eo cernunt sapientes ens iter et non-ens nexum.
5. In latum extenditur funus; ibine deorsum? Ibi sursum?
Generativae vires erant, viresque receptivae,
haec vires infra, illique impulsus supra.
6. Quis novit vere? Quisnam edicere valet
undenam nata, unde haec facta creatio?
Ipsi nam dii ei succedunt posteriores aeo.
Quis ergo novit unde exsurrexit totum?
7. Unde sit haec creatio, and fundaverit Ipse an non,
novit solum Ille qui in altissimis habitans
omnia scrutatur. Novit Ille solus,
vel forte Ipse hoc novit!

²¹ *AV* VII.81.2.

but it is also Prajāpati,²² the divine, the creator, simultaneously both sacrifice and sacrifice.²³ In this way sacrifice is understood as "the life-principle of all Gods and all beings."²⁴

This theme was so widely treated that it was possible to affirm that in the beginning the Gods were mortal²⁵ and that it was only through sacrifice that they become divine and eternal.²⁶ The reason for this is clearly given: "All that is (including all the Gods) has a vital principle, *atman*, the sacrifice."²⁷ It was through sacrifice²⁸ that Prajāpati disclosed to the Gods the secret of immortality. The Gods are the first created beings of the universe.²⁹

Prajāpati is at one and the same time the proper name of the all and the activity proper to that all, that is to say, the sacrifice.³⁰ Prajāpati, however, is not only the sacrifice but also the offerer³¹ and the oblation,³² the actual "thing" offered for the Gods³³ (whom he thus redeems) and, in addition, the result of the sacrifice.³⁴ He is the first beneficiary of his own activity.³⁵ The *puruṣa* is sacrificed, and yet he lives.³⁶

The explanation of these texts as well as of many others should not appear too involved, if we have grasped the spirit of the ancient scriptures with their myths and numerous symbols.³⁷ Let us approach these ideas constructively and see how we can summarize them in borrowed Western terms.

There exists only one single reality: the divine, absolute and infinite.³⁸ This latter is a living reality, *ad intra* as also *ad extra*. Three-quarters of the Absolute, according to the

²² *SB* X.4.3.3.

²³ See the symbolism of the *agnicayana* (the erection of the fire-altar).

²⁴ *SB* VIII.6.1.10.

²⁵ *TS* VIII.4.2.1, and also *SB* XI.2.3.6.

²⁶ *TS* VI.3.4.7, etc.

²⁷ *SB* XIV.3.2.1.

²⁸ *MaitS* II.2.2; *TS* II.3.2.1.

²⁹ This notion is in harmony with an idea within Hinduism that is very much alive, for the so-called polytheism of Hinduism consists far more in an awareness of the world of pure spirit (or, to use Christian terminology, of the angelic sphere) than in a belief in several deities. See, for example, W. Eidlitz, "Der lebendige Gott im Hinduismus. Die Devas und der eine Gott," *Kairos* 4 (1959): pp. 206–14.

³⁰ See the whole of *SB* V.1.1.1.

³¹ *AB* VII.8.2; *XXXIV*.1.1, etc.

³² *TMB* VII.2.1.

³³ *SB* V.1.1.1.1ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XI.1.8.2ff.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II.4.4.1ff.

³⁶ See *RV* X.130; *SB* VI.1.1.10. See furthermore the "agnum stantem tamquam occisum (ἑσθαρμένον)": cf. *Rev* 5:6; cf. also *ibid.*, 12.

³⁷ Not everyone, unfortunately, succeeds in doing so, and a number of otherwise excellent treatises misrepresent the intention of Indic Scriptures, just because their authors do not possess the needed spiritual affinity with Hinduism or because they think that they can approach a theme that is eminently religious by a method that is profane, that is, nonbelieving.

³⁸ "The Person [*puruṣa*] is all that was and that shall be" (*RV* X.90.2). This divine person could well serve to initiate a dialogue between East and West on the pseudo-question of Indic apersonalism. See also *BU* I.4.1.

"Since it is upon the person, that is to say, human personality that the West sets the greatest store, it desires to apply this highest of values to God. Inspired by the same motive and because she wishes to rid the idea of God of all anthropomorphism, India denies that God is a person, although she calls him the absolute being, pure spirit, absolute joy, everything in fact, except a person" (R. Panikkar, *Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr*, p. 59).

well-known Vedic symbolism,³⁹ are reserved for intrinsic intratrinitarian processes. The other quarter consists of the adventure of the divine with the world it has produced. The divine order, *ad intra* as also *ad extra*, is founded upon the law of sacrifice, of self-offering, of the gift of self, through which alone that which is born of sacrifice comes to life. But this sacrifice not only involves the gift of being, it signifies also the acceptance of a gift in return, the restoration of the being that has been given. Furthermore, neither the gift nor the recovery of the gift happens without the cooperation of the divine, and this cooperation in a certain way presupposes and even requires a kenosis and a glorification. The task of Man is to participate in the divine activity, to become an integral part of the cosmic sacrifice and thus to obtain eternal life.⁴⁰

It is not only Man, moreover, who thus reaches salvation. The whole universe is enabled to maintain itself in existence, thanks to the faithful cooperation of Man, cosmic priest, who holds in his hands the fate of all the worlds. Yet Man is not capable of performing this task of his alone, anymore than God, for His part, can involve himself solo in the affairs of the world. There must be a mediator who is not only both God and Man, but also both sacrifice and sacrificer. It is only the action of such a mediator that can constitute a sacrifice capable of reaching the divine, because it is he alone who prescribes the cosmic character of that sacrifice whose victim consists of the sum total of the elements of this universe. It is thanks to this sacrifice that not only do all the worlds and Man himself return to their source, but also are here and now brought to birth and to salvation by him who causes all things to subsist.⁴¹

Prajāpati and the Logos

We have no wish to claim that the nature and role of *vāc* are precisely those of the Christian *logos*. We may simply note that the Indian *vāc* is no further removed from the Christian *logos* than was the Neoplatonic *logos* that the writers of sacred scripture did not hesitate to use. If St. John had spoken Sanskrit, would he, we may wonder, have employed the word *vāc*? A fruitless question, no doubt. Nevertheless we may be permitted perhaps to interpret *vāc* by means of *logos* and thus bear witness to our veneration for the seer of Patmos.⁴²

³⁹ *RI* X.90.3–4.

⁴⁰ We may be permitted perhaps to refer to a writing from another culture. Chung King-tse (Confucius) says, "Take your place in the *li*" (*Analecta confuciana* VIII.8, trans. by A. Waley as "Let a man be given a firm footing by the study of ritual" [Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1956)]).

Li can be rendered by "rites" (ceremonies, correct demeanor, and similar expressions). We cannot make a firm pronouncement as to whether *li* has also the meaning of sacrifice, but it somehow always retains the meaning of cosmic liturgy. See the last verse: "To disregard the *li* is (for man) to deprive himself of occupying a position in the cosmos" (*Analecta confuciana* XX.3 ["He who does not know the rites cannot take his stand," translates Waley, *op. cit.*]). See also *ibid.*, XVI.13. This second idea is commonplace of Chinese culture: "The return is the movement of Tao," Lao-Tse, chap. XL, for example (see Fung Yu-Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* [New York: Macmillan, 1948]).

⁴¹ See, for the christological resonances, R. Panikkar, "Der Ūsvara des Vedānta und der Christus der Trinität. Ein philosophisches Problem," *Antaios* 2(5) (January 1961): pp. 446–55.

⁴² A. K. Coomaraswamy, a specialist in both Western and Eastern traditions, translates *vāc* as "wisdom." See, for example, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover, 1954), p. 130. If, instead of fixing our attention on the New Testament, we had done so on the Old, we would certainly have done the same. Everyone knows the analogy that exists between the Wisdom of the Old Testament and the *logos* of the New.

The instrument of Prajāpati is *vāc*, the *logos*. Without *vāc* no sacrifice is possible. "Prajāpati was the all (the One) [*idam*, "this" in its undefined aspect], *vāc* being his second."⁴³ Prajāpati formed a union with *vāc*. *Vāc* conceived. She departed from him and engendered the creatures. Then she returned to the bosom of Prajāpati."⁴⁴

On the other hand, the *logos* is, properly speaking, less the companion of Prajāpati than his expression, his projection, his word.⁴⁵ "He uttered his word and all the beings came to be."⁴⁶ "Prajāpati aroused the waters from the *logos* where they were residing, for the *logos* belongs to him. The *logos* was flung far and filled the universe."⁴⁷

It is possible to find many similar texts⁴⁸ containing profound intuitions with striking interpretations; light needs also to be shed on the relationship between *vāc*, the *logos*, and *śabda*, the expressed and spoken word. The connection between *vāc* and *śabda* represents, on the other hand, that cosmic interrelatedness that saves India from a hyperintense spiritualism and gives rise, on the other hand, to weird identifications between sounds, not unallied to magic.⁴⁹

Only the following aspect is of interest of our particular study. If Prajāpati, who at the beginning was undubitably utterly alone,⁵⁰ had not produced all things by means of and together with the *logos*, there would have been no means of their returning into unity. It is because the divine sacrifice was performed by means of words that the sacrifice of Man can take place at all, for Man has no other instrument than the word, which is the soul of sacrificial action and the *sine qua non* of every authentic act, that is, of every sacrifice. This fact underlies the scrupulous and excessive exactitude that is demanded in regard to the words of sacrifice, to such an extent that, by aberration, they may eclipse all other considerations and be invested with a near-magical power.⁵¹

Agni, the Fire

The texts state that "Prajāpati desired to multiply himself and to beget,⁵² and divine Agni was procreated."⁵³ Is there here a contradiction with what we were saying just now? We do not think so; at least Indic tradition has never felt it as such. Agni, we could say, was procreated⁵⁴ in some manner, whereas *vāc* was begotten.⁵⁵

⁴³ "*Vāc* is the wife," says one text, *SB* III.2.1.18, and in all events the metaphor of the sexual relation will always be considered the most perfect expression of union.

⁴⁴ *KathS* XII.5.27.1 (quoted by S. Lévi, op. cit., p. 22).

⁴⁵ *TMB* VII.6.1ff. (quoted by S. Lévi, loc. cit.).

⁴⁶ *AB* X.1.5 (quoted by S. Lévi, loc. cit.).

⁴⁷ *SB* VI.1.1.9 (quoted by S. Lévi, loc. cit.).

⁴⁸ Cf., for example, *RI* VIII.89.11; *X*.81.2-3 and 7; etc. *Vāc* is also Visvakarman, the architect of the universe, the One who makes all things.

⁴⁹ See *TMB* XX.14.2, where the syllables of *vāc* are given a cosmological significance.

⁵⁰ *MaitU* II.6.

⁵¹ See evidence in S. Lévi, op. cit., and in H. Hubert and M. Mauss, art. cit.

⁵² *Prajāpatir akamayata prajāyeyeti*.

⁵³ *TS* VII.1.1.4.

⁵⁴ "Asṛjāta," loc. cit. It is known that the root *ṣṛj* has the sense of produce, procreate, emit, etc., but it could also have the meaning "create," though in a less precise and technical sense perhaps than in Christian terminology.

⁵⁵ See *TMB* VII.6.3: "I desire, with the aid of *vāc* to procreate it—*vācā prajāmanā* [the seed that I carry in myself]. He [Prajāpati] begot *vāc*—*sa vācam vṛjāyata*." See also other already noted texts.

We must add, certainly, that the distinctions are not sharp and clear. We are admittedly adapting a little, just as the commentators of all ages and cultural backgrounds have done, with this difference perhaps that we do so consciously. It is only by means of this necessary transposition that a constructive rather than negative development is rendered possible.

However that may be, Agni occupies a special position among the creatures. Agni is the first among them⁵⁶ and indeed the only one that is immortal.⁵⁷ He is the Gods' envoy against *vāc*⁵⁸ and also their king.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Agni must be regarded as the ontological condition requisite for the cyclic sacrifice of the universe. Everything is summed up in Agni, and hence the sacrifice of Agni is *the* sacrifice. Thus, when Prajāpati desired to perform this comprehensive sacrifice, Agni is mentioned as "entering into" the five beings constituting the five offerings: Man, the horse, the cow, the lamb, and the goat.⁶⁰ "All are Agni."⁶¹ The *agnihotra* or fire-sacrifice, is, therefore, the heart of all sacrifices. It is by the *agnihotra* that one becomes immortal.⁶² God is in truth a "consuming fire."⁶³ "Your face [your mouth] is a flaming fire whose radiance consumes the whole universe," says the *Gita*.⁶⁴

It is with these facts in mind that one can understand the innumerable details and directions that the texts supply. We have here a sequence of representative acts⁶⁵—Agni taking the place of Prajāpati, the five victims of Agni, Agni again of the five victims (now as an object and no longer as the subject of the sacrifice)—until finally we pass from the *agnihotra* to all other private and ceremonial sacrifices.⁶⁶

⁵⁶ SB II.2.4.1; VI.6.1.26; *KausB* VI.1.

⁵⁷ SB II.2.2.10.

⁵⁸ SB II.5.1.21.

⁵⁹ SB II.6.4.4.

⁶⁰ See SB VI.2.1.2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See, for example, *KatbU* I.13.

⁶³ Heb 12:29 (cf. Dt 4:24). Around this figure of speech, Origen proceeds to build according to the rules a theology of fire, comparable perhaps to that of light (cf. Mt 3:11; etc.). To this should be added the "sword of fire" idea (Gen 3:24) that serves as a leitmotif in the consideration of one of the rare extrabiblical expressions of Christ: "He who approaches me, approaches the fire"; nor of course should Lk 12:49 be forgotten. On Origen, who is followed by a very important part of Christian tradition, cf. the collection of passages translated into German by H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1938). There is no doubt that a study on these same lines of comparison with Hinduism would be a worthwhile enterprise: "Ignis autem in altari semper ardebit" (Lev 6:5). It is fire that renders the offering pleasing to God. See Lev 2:16; 3:11–16. Fire springs forth from God (Lev 9:23ff.; 2 Chron 7:1–3) but "it did not consume man's gift, but rather sanctified and divinised it" (F. X. Durrwell, *La résurrection de Jésus. Mystère de salut* (Le Puy: Mappus, 1954), p. 82.

⁶⁴ BG XI.19.

⁶⁵ See a clear passage in SB VI.2.2.15.

⁶⁶ Over and above the central role played by the altar—as a center of the world, meeting point of the human and the divine, etc.—a special significance is attached to *pariagnikriya*. Here the priest proceeds to describe a circle with the fire (or even without fire) round the oblation (generally three times and always from left to right). See the comments of H. Oldenberg in *Vedic Hymns. Hymns to Agni*, Sacred Books of the East Series 46 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897), and "the threefold meaning of the rite," according to H. Hubert and M. Mauss, art. cit., pp. 65ff., as well as the principal sources:

1. Agni, priest of the Gods, sanctifies the victim and points out to it the road to heaven (cf. AB VI.5.1 and VI.11.3).
2. The magic circle separates the victim from both demons and Gods.
3. The rite proper resembles a benediction.

It is obviously impossible for us to enter into every detail, but we think we have said enough to have described clearly the role of sacrifice within Hinduism.⁶⁷

Prayer

The process of substitution was not confined to the *objects* of sacrifice. As we have already seen, it was pursued by the Upanishads, which proceeded to interiorize this same sacrifice within the *subject*.

The *Maitri-Upaniṣad* begins as follows: "The Brahman sacrifice is incontestably the interpretation of all the sacrifices [fire-sacrifices] of the ancients. Consequently, each time that the worshiper handles the fire, he must call to mind the *atman*. The sacrifice is then fulfilled perfectly."⁶⁸ We have already noted that the *agnihotra* constitutes the quintessence of sacrifice. This quintessence in its turn enshrines another: the inner *agnihotra*,⁶⁹ that is to say, the offering of the breath or *prāṇa*.⁷⁰ When the ancients recognized this latter, they desisted from the *agnihotra*.⁷¹ We have here, properly speaking, more than a simple substitution;⁷² this is a very serious attempt at interiorization.⁷³ For one who failed to understand this connection, to perform the *agnihotra* would be the equivalent of removing the glowing (live) coals and dispersing the (dead)⁷⁴ ashes. These texts do not propose to suppress the *agnihotra*, but to give it a deeper meaning: "Just as hungry children stand around their mother," we read after the text just quoted, "so do beings encircle the *agnihotra*; indeed, they position themselves in a circle around the *agnihotra*."⁷⁵

This, moreover, is in line with the teaching of the ancient masters.⁷⁶ "Man is only partially born;⁷⁷ it is through sacrifice, indeed, that he truly comes to birth."⁷⁸ On the other hand, it is

⁶⁷ In addition to works already quoted, cf. H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*; J. G. Corta (Stuttgart, 1923), pp. 307ff. Furthermore, a precious mine of information can profitably be consulted in the work of A. Dubois, *Mœurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde* (Paris: Métailié, 1985); H. Bhattacharyya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4, *The Religions* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956). Cf., for example, L. Renou and J. Filliozat, *L'Inde classique*, vol. 1 (Paris: Payot, 1947), no. 697–752 for Vedic rites and 988–1267 for the different religious expressions of Hinduism; see also R. B. Pandey, *Hindū Śaṅkaras* (Banaras: Vikrama Publications, 1949), or a manual of practical teaching, *Sanātana dharma* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1940), chap. 2, pp. 173–271.

⁶⁸ *MaitU* I.1.

⁶⁹ "Antaram-agni-hotram" (*KausU* II.5).

⁷⁰ On *prāṇa*, the supreme divine life-energy, see *AV* XI.4.

⁷¹ *KausU*, loc. cit.

⁷² This interpretation is close to that of E. Frauwallner, *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie*, p. 42.

⁷³ See M. Eliade, *Le Yoga, immortalité et liberté*, p. 120, where the subject of "the interiorisation of the rite" is treated.

⁷⁴ *CU* V.24.1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, V.24.5.

⁷⁶ It is startling to note how a certain "modern" Indian mentality stigmatizes the brahmanical period as "meaningless ceremonialism" (R. D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* [Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1926], p. 6), and thinks, naturally, that "the Brahmanical idea of sacrifice comes ultimately to be entirely transformed into a new conception of sacrifice altogether—that of mental sacrifice."

⁷⁷ S. Lévi (op. cit., p. 107) notes that *ajato* could be read for *ajato*. In this case, man before sacrifice would be merely a "non-born."

⁷⁸ *MaitS* III.6.7.

"Man himself who is in truth the sacrifice."⁷⁹ This is so because "Man is the offerer and every time that sacrifice is performed it has the measurement of the man."⁸⁰ One discovers that the "measurement of the man" refers to his intellect,⁸¹ and thus the sacrifice becomes a sacrifice of the human spirit.⁸² The transition noted above from Prajāpati to Agni and thence to the five chief sacrifices and thence to the differing lesser rites is simply a movement in depth. An example is to be found in the performance of the *aśva-medha* in place of the *puruṣa-medha* (where the sacrifice of a horse represents the sacrifice of a man and replaces it). The sacrifice of Brahman (*brahmayajñah*), previously the fifth of the great sacrifices,⁸³ is more and more considered *the* sacrifice, because brahman is no longer, as before, the Arena of the sacred teaching but rather the Origin and Source of Prajāpati himself.⁸⁴ Or, as we read elsewhere, "Prajāpati is brahman in its entirety"⁸⁵—and it is this same Brahman that is identified with the inner *atman*.⁸⁶ From this point onward the brahman-sacrifice becomes simply the discovery of the true nature of the *atman*-within-us.

Sacrifice, therefore, consists in a descent into the self, a deepening, so as to attain the goal sought by the ancient sacrifices. Herein lies the highest peak of Indian wisdom. Concentration, prayer, contemplation, interiorization, and deepening are all concepts each of which requires to be given special content. We shall be obliged, however, to limit ourselves to a consideration of prayer as a specifically human form of worship. The cosmic sacrifice is the work of God who provides for the salvation, or return to himself, of the whole universe, a work in which each man has a responsibility to take an active part. He must contribute positively to his own salvation. He must, indeed, save himself, as is the contention of certain trends of thought which, having ill understood the concept of divine grace, admit it implicitly nonetheless. Prayer is worship that leads to salvation because it is the self-offering of the praying man.

Nevertheless, we must not assign to prayer the role of a spiritual sacrifice, because for certain schools of thought it is not simply a mental activity. Its sphere includes also, as we shall shortly see, the sounds that are uttered in vocal prayer as well as the bodily postures and other practices of Yoga. Prayer, however, is always and unfailingly sacred action, worship.

Man attains salvation

- *Through* prayer—which is, in the first place, the means for attaining the goal
- *In* prayer—for prayer is in fact the goal itself

Salvation through Prayer

Salvation is obtained *through* prayer, because prayer is not only a moral reality but also an ontological reality. It has two roles: in the first place, it removes obstacles, which is furthermore, in two ways, negative and positive.

⁷⁹ CU III.16.1. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 394, reconciles the ancient Puruṣa and the "modern" man of the *Upaniṣad* by translating, "Verily a person is a sacrifice."

⁸⁰ SB I.3.2.1.

⁸¹ See *Prasū* III.10, the exegesis of which could serve as a starting-off point for Hindū and Buddhist anthropology. See again *MaitU* VI.34.

⁸² See the whole text on sacrifice in Rom 12:1, where before the exhortation to readers to practice λογικὴν λατρείαν, there is mention of σώματα ὑμῶν.

⁸³ The four other sacrifices were the sacrifice to beings (*bhūṭayajñah*), to humans (*manuṣyayajñah*), to the ancestors (*pitṛyajñah*), and to the Gods (*devayajñah*). See SB XI.5.6.1.

⁸⁴ See *Samavidhāna-brahmaṇa*, I.1ff.

⁸⁵ SB VII.3.1.42.

⁸⁶ See an excellent account of the development in L. Silburn, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–110.

First, the negative. Prayer does away with obstacles, for nobody is capable of leading a life of prayer if he does not detach himself from all wordly fetters and realize the vital distinction (the first effect of prayer for a beginner) between the eternal and the temporal.⁸⁷ Śaṅkarācārya adds three other conditions:⁸⁸ Nobody can devote himself to contemplation of the highest truth

1. Without first renouncing the egoistic remuneration of all his actions
2. Without submitting freely to a discipline so radical so as to effect the conversion of heart
3. Without burning for salvation with a pure and single-eyed zeal⁸⁹

It is a commonplace in *Vedānta* that the study of *brahmaavidya* entails certain other practical disciplines.⁹⁰

The *positive* function of this first exercise in the life of prayer is its moral function. The first negative conditions can only be completely fulfilled by means of a life of prayer. It is prayer that enables a man to see things in a true light and to lead a moral life.

The second and principal function of prayer is that it causes us to become what we in reality *are*. Hinduism lays stress (perhaps sometimes too strongly) less upon the independence than on the superiority of the ontological over against the moral. Prayer does not merely make us good citizens and nice people; it also, if we may dare to say so, sanctifies us. In other words, we reach salvation through prayer, for prayer helps us to "self-realization." It causes us to discover, not only through the quest involved but also in an ontological manner, the true nature of salvation and hence actually leads us to salvation, for it reveals in a real manner what was in fact already present. The person unfamiliar with Hinduism will have that much more difficulty in grasping this thought just because very often the true attitude is jumbled up with a number of philosophical interpretations. It is not our intention to embark here on a philosophical discourse; we would like, however, just to explain the basic idea, expressing ourselves in terms that are currently used in the West.

It is thanks to contemplation that Man is saved, is liberated, for he contemplates God, who is salvation. Now if salvation is God, it, like Him, must be immutable and omnipresent. Anybody can reach "belief," but so long as he does not "contemplate," he does not reach salvation; he *is* not salvation. There is a progression from faith to vision, this latter consisting in actualization. The instant one *sees*, one *is* that which one contemplates. The actual intuition annihilates the object-subject separation. The thing that one contemplates is no longer simply

⁸⁷ *Nityanītya-vastu-viveka* is the technical expression for this stage. See Śaṅkara *BSBh* I.1.1 (cf. also on the same subject *Vivekacūḍamani* 20). Prayer also brings about an awareness of the *atmanatma-vastu-viveka* (the critical distinction between that which comprises the self—*atman*—and that which does not comprise the self—*anatman*) as an indispensable condition for salvation. See Vācaspati Miśra, *Bhāmī* (see, for example, the edition published in Madras, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1933).

⁸⁸ Loc. cit.

⁸⁹ See a commentary on these three points in S. Radhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, vol. 1 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), pp. 45ff.

⁹⁰ This is the usual interpretation of *atha*, the first word of the *Brahma-sūtra* (I.1.1). It means literally "then" and has been translated as "after," that is to say, *after* the *Purva-mīmāṃsā-sūtra* (in other words, the *karmakāṇḍa*, i.e., the rites and practical side of the revelation [śruti] have been learned and practiced [one proceeds to the quest for Brahman]). Other scholars interpret the word *atha* as if it presupposed the knowledge and practice of the *Dharma-sūtra*, although Śaṅkara (*BSBh* I.1.1) rejects this explanation.

an object, but is both the contemplation itself and the one who contemplates.⁹¹ Does one see Truth? One *is* Truth. The one who arrives has nothing left either to "be" or to attain. Salvation is attained through prayer.

How, then, is such a state of contemplation to be reached? Is it realizable in this present world,⁹² even without the "grace of the creator"?⁹³ The whole of Hinduism is simply the impassioned quest of answers to these burning questions.

Salvation in Prayer

The foregoing remarks will straightaway throw light on the fact that salvation is attained, not only *through* prayer, as one rises higher and higher until one reaches the summit of contemplation, but also *in* prayer, that is, in prayer at its highest. We attempt to explain: If I reach an intuition, or glimpse, of reality itself, this intuition is of not only an ultimate but also a definitive degree. It is de-*fin*-itive, the very "*finis*" or end, the goal, no longer a means.⁹⁴ Salvation is found in prayer; it is, precisely, intuitive prayer. Vocal expression passes into the prayer of worship; prayer is aspiration and in this aspiration is the end: salvation. If Hinduism stresses the value of contemplation and excites meditation, it by no means does so with the aim of going beyond in order to attain some *other* goal. Prayer, for Hinduism, is never a sort of intermediary. It was precisely this notion that was caustically attacked by the second period in connection with an obsolete theory of sacrifice,⁹⁵ which used and abused sacrifice in order to attain certain ends, even certain material rewards. Prayer alone is in reality a sacrifice of the self, since it is an offering of the self to the self. Perfect worship is not something that one performs in order to assure one's *salvation*, but is prayer itself, that is to say, *salvation* itself. Vocal prayer does not cease, but ad-oration passes into inner aspiration. The comic sacrifice that the all comprises is here called prayer, contemplation, intuition devoid of parts, devoid of dualism.

Adoration

If the preceding explanation has been sufficiently clear, the third form of Hindū worship, which is called *pūja*, should be readily understandable.⁹⁶

Prayer can, properly speaking, have no object, for the object-subject distinction finally vanishes. At the beginning, however, the object appears indispensable,⁹⁷ although

⁹¹ See R. Panikkar, "Die existentielle Phänomenologie der Wahrheit," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 64 (1956), especially p. 35, where corresponding sources are to be found listed.

⁹² See R. Otto, *Die Gnadensreligion Indiens und das Christentum* (Gotha: Klotz, 1930).

⁹³ *KathU* II.20. See the excellent commentary of J. N. Rawson, op. cit., pp. 107ff.

⁹⁴ "The śruti [Sacred Scripture] uses the words *jñāna* [awareness, knowledge, contemplation] and *labha* [conquest, possession] as a synonyms," says Śaṅkara (*BUB* I.4.7)—a significant statement.

⁹⁵ "Once upon a time [says Bhīṣma in the *Mahabharata*] there was placed on one side of a pair of scales a thousand horse-sacrifices and on the other Truth. This latter was found to be heavier than the thousand *śvamedha*" (*SantPar* CLXII.26).

⁹⁶ On the etymology of *pūja*, there is no unanimity. Some (J. Charpentier) refer it to a Dravidian source; others (such as J. Przyluski) would like to see in it an evolution of primitive agricultural rites, while yet others (such as P. Thieme) derive it from Sanskrit roots; cf. C. Regamey, op. cit., p. 117, and L. Renou and J. Filliozat, op. cit., no. 1178.

⁹⁷ "One employs it gradually," remarks succinctly *YS* III.6, stressing the value of contemplation (*dhyāna*). *BhagP* II.2 gives as an example the adoration of Viṣṇu by stages, starting with his feet and proceeding finally to his smiling countenance.

neither prayer itself nor the praying man is capable of defining it. This object can only be the divine, under whatever form it may present itself, and thus prayer becomes adoration, that is to say, *puja*.

We will relegate to one side all superfluous details and hold on to the essential.⁹⁸ The essential meaning of *puja* can be summed up in the following way: It is not sheer idolatry in the usual meaning of the word. It is part and parcel of the same tradition as the Vedic sacrifices.⁹⁹ It could, in fact, if need arose, replace them.

It is one and the same process that substitutes for the externals of sacrifice and interiorization thereof in prayer, and which in the present case (*puja*) tends toward a simplification (which manifests itself more particularly in a concretization). The reason is that, if Vedic sacrifices are difficult to accomplish, so also, and more so, is pure contemplation. Ordinary people, especially, require simple paths of devotion, and one such is *puja*, which consists in adoration of the divinity under one perceptible form or another. Furthermore, *puja* does not aim at being a substitute for the path of wisdom or at superseding a life of prayer; it simply aspires to be an introduction and preparation for these two paths. This is what gives *puja* its broad and provisional character.

Puja, moreover, is not exclusive. One form of it does not exclude a quite different, even contradictory, form. Two forms of *puja* may not only coexist peaceably but may also be undertaken, in response to his desire, by the same person.

Puja adapts itself in a flexible manner to both circumstances and states of soul. It desires only a subsidiary role. Once this role has been fulfilled, *puja* becomes unnecessary and valueless, and whatever image it had offered as an object of veneration as God is deliberately placed on one side or even spurned. *Puja* is of assistance equally for the *jñāna-marga* and the *bhakti-marga* itself.

Puja remains invariably a very simple method within the reach of the masses and necessary also on occasion to that category of educated and enlightened persons who still need concrete representations.

Puja thus means veneration, adoration, homage to the divine—to the divine under a perceptible form. Images, gestures, singing, and actions have all here something to contribute but not necessarily, as certain Indologists have at times wrongly asserted, in the realm of the merely magical. *Puja* has a twofold goal; on the one hand, the worshiper seeks to obtain through its good offices a grace from the divinity (health, children, success, peace of mind, heaven, and similar favors)—and it is here that one senses magic to loom large—while on the other it helps man along the road to perfection and facilitates his attainment of his goal, realization, *mokṣa*.

Furthermore, *puja* constitutes the fullness of Hindū worship. "In worship, everything which exists in the reality within is represented in a perceptible manner in the reality without, under the sign of a symbol."¹⁰⁰ Now this is precisely what happens in *puja*. The real philosophico-religious question is in fact to know why such signs possess a representative value of this kind, when this value cannot be said to spring from the free will of Man. The wealth of symbolism inherent in the whole of Hindū reality is taken for granted in each manifestation of worship; otherwise each action is void, all faith blind.

⁹⁸ See H. Oldenberg, "Synoptical Survey of the Contents of the Gṛhya-Sūtras," in *The Gṛhya-Sūtras: Rules of Vedic Domestic Ceremonies*, Sacred Books of the East Series 30 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), pp. 306ff.

⁹⁹ See L. Renou and J. Filliozat, op. cit., no. 1178.

¹⁰⁰ M. Vereno, op. cit., p. 51.

It is well here to recall once again the close object-subject relationship, that is to say, the mutual constitutive connection that links God and Man in the performance of *pūjā*.¹⁰¹ "It is the *bhakti* [abandonment, devotion] of the *bhakta* [devotees] that causes the Bhagavat [the blessed Lord] to manifest himself."¹⁰² *Pūjā* performed in front of an image actualizes a particular type of union between "physical" causality and "intentional" causality, or, if one prefers, between the *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis*.¹⁰³ The fact that the divinity takes bodily shape in a statue is not caused by the worship; nevertheless, without the devotion of the worshiper, this presence of the divinity in the statue does not take place.¹⁰⁴ The *pranapratiṣṭha*—that is to say, the access of life to the *murti* (image)—is not a transubstantiation.

As far as the common man is concerned it is in a concrete, loving, personal abandonment that the essence of religion consists. The costly brahminical sacrifice and the difficult self-annihilation proclaimed by the Upanisads are here replaced, represented, and even to a certain degree transcended by the down-to-earth loving devotion of the simple to their beloved *iṣṭadevata* of stone, their *murti*.¹⁰⁵

Brief Cosmological Survey

The visible wealth and superabundant opulence of Indian temples are only a pale relation of the inner spiritual magnificence and wide variety of Indian forms of worship. These latter are so numerous that it is impossible for us to deal with them here exhaustively.¹⁰⁶ Even if the various Hindū spiritualities stress different aspects of the one edifice, the description that follows remains faithful in its broad outlines to the spirit of Hinduism. It is only our forms of expression that are borrowed from the West.

First of all, a word concerning the why and the wherefore of this sketch. The average "modern" man, firm-rooted as he is in his own religion (whichever it may be), is very inclined to feel that he is not only different from but also superior to "primitive" man, simply because he lives in a mental climate of self-awareness and desires to account for everything. He deems himself to be free from superstition and religious quirks. He believes that his religion, or even more, his spirituality is purer than that of others, because he has reduced it to certain

¹⁰¹ "The characteristics of images are determined by the relation that subsists between the adorer and the adored" (Śukrācārya, *Sukranitisara* [quoted in A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 162]). See also B. K. Sarkar, *The Sukraniti* (Allahabad: Sacred Books of the Hindūs, 1914).

¹⁰² "Despite this," this text goes on, "one should follow in iconography the directives of the Ancients" (source unknown, given by Gopalabhatta [quoted by A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., p. 163]).

¹⁰³ "It is for the advantage (*artha*) of the worshipper (*upasaka*) that the Brahman—whose nature is intelligence (*cin-maya*), besides whom there is no other, who is impartite and incorporated—is aspectually conceived (*rupa-kalpna*)" (*Ramopaniṣad*, in B. C. Bhattacharya, *Indian Images* [Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1921], p. 17 [quoted by A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., p. 214]).

¹⁰⁴ See R. Panikkar, "Eucharistischer Glaube und Idolatrie," *Kairos* 2, pp. 85ff.

¹⁰⁵ The (name of) God chosen and adopted, or proposed by the *guru*, according to the disciple's personality, is a very important factor in Hindū spirituality.

¹⁰⁶ See the original texts (*śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihasa*, *purāṇa*, *āgama*, *darsana*, along with their *bhāṣyas*, and also the popular literature) and the works already cited. See also L. D. Barnett, *The Heart of India* (London: J. Murray, 1913); S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindū View of Life* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927); A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1897); H. K. Sastri, *South-Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses* (Madras: Government Press, 1916); *The Religion of the Hindūs*, ed. K. W. Morgan (New York: Roland Press, 1953); J. W. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature in India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920); etc.

"reasonable" actions (though this testifies more to his submissiveness and discipline than to any conviction he has of their ontological efficacy) while anything over and above is relegated to the sphere of the moral. All that has been said about Hinduism in this book may appear foreign and somewhat strange to "modern" man, who, though he may be ready to concede that these rites contain a basis of truth, cannot help regarding them with a certain superiority as being both outworn and useless.¹⁰⁷

If we are to make use of the division of religions, unfortunate and erroneous as it is, into "primitive" and "superior," then Hinduism incontestably must be placed in the second group. Just because Hinduism is an authentic religion, it possesses not only lofty doctrine and a highly developed philosophy but also a genuine religious observance, which one cannot ignore without wronging Hinduism and distorting its image. It would be incorrect to identify Hinduism with its own philosophical system—*darśana*—though one form of neo-Hinduism, influenced by a certain way of thought prevalent in Europe, is inclined to justify such an identification.¹⁰⁸

If we lay stress on the worship element, it is by no means to charge Hinduism with being "primitive," for all authentic religion and not only primitive religion is characterized by worship. We may note that it is "modern" religiousness, rather, that runs the risk of being shipwrecked in the primitive if it does not rediscover the meaning of worship, because without worship no religion can subsist.

No one, surely, can fail to see, after what has been said, that in Hinduism worship is the real dynamic, capable of saving both Man and the universe. Religion exists as the vehicle of salvation. Worship and worship alone possesses this salvific power. We shall indicate briefly the variety of relationships existing between worship and the whole creation.¹⁰⁹

The Sacrifice of the Cosmos

Religion is so little the affair of the individual that it does not confine itself to Man. It concerns, even and also, the cosmos. Of course, Man and the cosmos are not, perhaps, dissociated, but the former cannot endeavor to turn in upon himself nor consider the latter merely as

¹⁰⁷ See the well-known remark of Goethe (*Zahme Xenien*, 9): "He who possesses science and art possesses also religion. He who has neither science nor art, let him get some religion!"

¹⁰⁸ Even as regards *Ādānta*, let us be on our guard against forgetting that it does not claim simply to be the end of the *Veda* (*Veda-anta*) but that its real name is *uttaramimāṃsā* (higher *mimāṃsā*) or *brahmamimāṃsā*. *Mimāṃsā*, moreover, means the practical existential hermeneutic inherent in action ("the desire to think with intensity").

¹⁰⁹ For an appreciation of what follows in the historico-religious context, a certain knowledge of the background of the question is indispensable. In addition to the reference books that we have already mentioned or shall mention, the following works might be consulted with profit: A. Vorbichler, *Das Opfer auf den uns heute noch erreichbaren ältesten Stufen der Menschheitsgeschichte*, St. Gabriel Studien 15 (Mödling bei Wien: St. Gabriel, 1956); S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, vols. 1–5 (Paris: Leroux, 1905–1923); L. Moraldi, *Espiazione sacrificale e riti espiatori nell'ambiente biblico e nell'Antico Testamento*, *Analecta biblica* 5 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1956); A. Bertholet, *Der Sinn des kultischen Opfers*, *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1942); R. Will, *Le culte*, vol. 1, *Le caractère religieux du culte* (Strasbourg-Paris: Istra, 1925); F. König (ed.), *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, vols. 1–3 (Wien: Herder, 1951); W. Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, vols. 1–12 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1912–1955); Schmidt, *Ethnologische Bemerkungen zu theologischen Opfertheorien*, *Jahrbuch des Missionshauses St. Gabriel* 1 (Mödling bei Wien: St. Gabriel, 1922); G. Gusdorf, *L'expérience humaine du sacrifice* (Paris: PUF, 1948).

the passive stage whereon his destiny unrolls. Man and the universe form a pair, and religion, which aims at saving Man in his entirety, cannot do so without at the same time involving the cosmos. Religious worship thus contains a cosmic dimension precisely because it is human worship, for Man being a *human* creature is truly a *creature* and hence is creation. He must excommunicate himself from creation nor sound a false note in the divine play, namely, the return of all things, lest he play the heretic's part. He is truly a participant in this symphony, and if the whole universe did not echo it, his voice would be inaudible, nonexistent.

The cosmos consists of a spatial and temporal framework, a material structure in which all things *exist*, and exist in space and time. The cosmic oblation, consequently, comprises the sacrifices of space, of time, and of material objects.

Space

Space as a religious category—or rather, space as the man of religion experiences it—has nothing in common with a Newtonian concept of space, which regards it as a box in which experiments in physics take place. Nor is it a homogeneous expanse pertaining to sensible objects, a measurable distance between bodies. From the point of view of religion, space does not belong to any philosophical or scientific category. It is a sacred reality whose function is, precisely, that of containing the differing spatial aspects of other ways of viewing. Sacred space may be defined as the undiminished spatial dimension of things, just as God “created” them, we might say: as they have in fact “come to birth” (in a way accidentally) and as the man of piety views them in the presence of God in a particular metaspatial perspective.

Space is by no means homogeneous; it is heterogeneous and for this reason defies all measurement. The reality termed space does not allow itself to be reduced to quantitative terms; it is not a material dimension of anything. It is not susceptible to being measured but at the most to being circumscribed, provided one has a unit of measurement that permits one to gauge a being's depth or ontological distance—that is to say, its distance from God, from the source, from the final definitive state of matter, which is less or more according to its particular situation. Even so, however, one can only estimate the spatial dimension of a being with reference to itself, for this measurement is only valid in the vertical direction—that is to say, with reference to God—and not in the horizontal, *vis-à-vis* other objects, since there exists no common denominator. Each being in its spatial dimension is a solitary.

Without providing us with a unit of measurement—for it is not a question either of measuring or acknowledging the distance of which we speak but of surmounting and overcoming it—worship enables us, precisely, to restore space to its definitive state. Worship is an external activity, a psychosomatic activity on the part of Man, less because Man is a sensible being than because the world is material and spatial, and because it is of importance to advance this spatial world to its final conclusion.

Through the intervention of Man and the “sovereign” collaboration of God, worship assures, one might say, the ascent of the world of matter. Whether this involves a certain destruction within the spatial realm or simply a transmutation is a serious question of belief, but one that does not disprove the point that worship preserves spatiality. This process gradually invades the cosmos and succeeds in transforming it little by little. To aid it in its advance toward plenitude, worship has a need of certain points of spatial reference: an altar, a temple, holy places, pilgrimage centers, the sun, the moon, stars, and so on.

The science of religions has in our own day rediscovered the immense importance of all these focal points.¹¹⁰ However, it is difficult as a whole to free oneself from a certain anthro-

¹¹⁰ There are innumerable contemporary works on this subject. See, for example, the excellent

pocentrism. The reason for the importance of the temple, for example, is not only that it answers the need of Man, who is a corporeal being, for a place favorable to his individual or collective worship, but is also and above else connected with the function in religion of space.¹¹¹ The temple is, first, a place of the manifestation of God, next an assembly hall for the community or the individual, and finally the dwelling of God himself. But the fundamental reason is still more profound and to be found in the cosmic significance of religion. The temple is the meeting point between heaven and earth; in itself it possesses a mediatorial and theandric value, because the space it encloses is already sanctified, already transformed. As the picture-symbol of the heavenly abode, it expresses in concrete terms here on earth this final destination. Furthermore, it not only permits Man to save himself by being the locus in which he receives the divine grace but also enables him to fulfill his mission: to make of the entire cosmos a real and veritable temple.¹¹²

The worship that Man performs in concert with God, *in* the world and *with* the world, constitutes the sacrifice of holy space or, in other terms, the sanctification of the world which is still distant and separated from God, in order to enable that world truly to accomplish a liberating de-fin-itive re-surgence.

The cosmogonic description relating to the sun, moon, and stars; the detail-loaded directives for the erection of the altar; the rules to be followed in the construction of a temple; and the sacred character ascribed to certain localities, caves, mountains, and so on are not the simple fantasies of primitive minds. They reflect a facet of reality, one that cannot, however, be put in rationalist categories, for these ancient traditions of mankind are a reflection of the connaturality of Man and the cosmos.

Time

The same thing applies to time as to space, *mutatis muntandis*. In every religion there are sacred times. The religious experience of time evokes the metaphor of a certain sort of bridge, heterogeneous and unparallelled, that both links me with God, my ultimate, and also separates me from him. In this religious context, time, which claims to integrate the partial aspects of all "times," can be regarded in the same way as space as a distance, a separation, although even in this case it is a question of an ontological trench running between beings and Being that both unites and separates them.

The temporal nature of Man and of the other creatures is regulated and transcended by worship. Yet for the changing and salvation for the world, time is necessary. Time constitutes the cosmic rhythm by means of which the universe proceeds toward its goal.

bibliographical material to be found in the works of M. Eliade.

¹¹¹ See in connection with the temple: S. Kramrisch, *The Hindü Temple*, vols. 1-2 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946); M. Winternitz, "Einige Bemerkungen über das Bauopfer bei den Indern," *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 17 (1887): pp. 37ff. The question is nowadays arousing on the Christian side a growing interest among a number of theologians and architects working in the sphere of sacred art. See J. Daniélou, *Le signe du temple ou de la présence de Dieu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942); Y. M. J. Congar, *Le mystère du temple* (Paris: Cerf, 1958); M. Schmidt, *Prophet und Tempel. Eine Studie zum Problem der Gottesnähe im Alten Testament* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948).

¹¹² See the practice common to all religions of locating the center of the world first on a specified mountaintop (Meru, Kailash, etc.), then on any mountaintop that possesses a temple, and finally on each and every mountain or in each house on earth, thence throughout the universe. See the Christian expressions: the heavenly Jerusalem, basilica, icon, the human body (as a temple of the Holy Trinity), and then the church, no longer regarded in terms of a building but as a universal mystical body. As everyone knows, the early Vedic rites and the early church knew nothing of temples.

Thus, ages and years, recurrent feasts, dances, pilgrimages,¹¹³ and so on, are sacred periods of rest and work, of action and prayer; they constitute religious categories, constitutive and existential parts of worship, regulated by means of worship.¹¹⁴

While time is undoubtedly rediscovering little by little the sacred aspect of space, our contemporary age seems less aware of the heterogeneous character of time and of the sacred reality that it constitutes. Time and the temporal are frequently mentioned but nearly always in a form that is autonomous. People "philosophize" in its regard when in reality it is a theological question. It is said, for example, that time is a constituent factor in Man, but it is too easily forgotten that this idea insofar as it is a temporal problem does not in the final analysis depend on the intellect alone nor even on the will, but on "God," and that it is he who permits us to liberate or to fulfill real time in worship and through worship.

Worship enables us to transcend time not only by setting us in that first state that was ours when our original nature still possessed all its purity and plenitude, but also by causing us to anticipate the final supratemporal condition. This tension between the beginning and the end which itself constitutes the eschatological dimension of worship, is essential to it. It is precisely because it transcends the normal conditions of our experience in this world that worship is always eschatological. Thus, worship that is worthy of the name is both means and end—a means toward eschatology and the end, that is to say, eschatology itself.

Things

Space (in terms of matter) and time (in terms of duration) are transformed by worship and both reach their plenitude for the salvation of the things of this world. Things are sacred objects and have in worship their proper place and function. They may, equally, be profane and impure, but no single thing is indifferent and neutral. The world of things also is a religious world. Now, it is precisely the liturgy that forms the milieu of Man's proper relationship with things. Without the liturgy, that is to say, without the connection with the divine, no human communication, that is, no communication on the horizontal plane, is possible.

There are certain things to which Man offers sacrifice because they "incarnate" the Absolute; but there are certain others that he offers in sacrifice because it is precisely through their "dis-incarnation" that they rejoin the Absolute or help men to reach the same Absolute.

The *śruti* is full of divinized "things" such as fire,¹¹⁵ water,¹¹⁶ earth,¹¹⁷ the *soma*,¹¹⁸ the altar,¹¹⁹

¹¹³ We are speaking here of Hinduism, but what we are saying is equally valid for all religions. See, for example, on this same point, the excellent work of L. Zander, "Le pèlerinage," in L. Beauduin, *L'Église et les Églises*, vol. 2 (Chevetogne: Irénikon, 1955), pp. 469–86.

¹¹⁴ See M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year* (Calcutta: Association Press, 1921); P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Festivities* (Madras: Higginbothams, 1921); A. C. Mukerji, *Hindu Fasts and Feasts* (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1918); C. H. Buck, *Faiths, Fairs and Festivals of India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1917); W. J. Culshaw, *Tribal Heritage* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949); B. A. Gupte, *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1919).

¹¹⁵ See the *RV* hymns to Agni, for example, *RV* I.1; V.11; VI.9.

¹¹⁶ See *RV* VII.49. Water occupies a primordial place in the Vedic cosmogony. It is said that Agni is born from the waters, and Varuna is often associated with them.

¹¹⁷ See the imposing hymn *AV* XII.1.

¹¹⁸ See the whole of Book IX of the *RV*—for example, *RV* IX.15.

¹¹⁹ The altar is mentioned in several hymns in Agni. See, for example, *RV* I.150.1, where the altar is called "the place of treasure," which means "the place where riches are obtained through sacrifice and prayer" (R. T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, vol. 1 [Benares: Lazarus, 1889]), p. 261n1). See also

the pressing-stones,¹²⁰ all of which are involved in the sacrifice. The material cosmos is never left on one side.¹²¹ All is interdependent,¹²² and it is only in such a context that Man's daily life finds its meaning.¹²³

A special place must be assigned to such sacred objects as can be manipulated or moved, namely *murti*¹²⁴ that is to say, much-venerated objects that are not to be translated either by the term *ikon* or *idol*. They are the incarnation of the divinity with the dynamic of the homage paid to him by Man.

Worship makes use of things and particularly of natural things, not only because they represent the intention of Man (with regard to oblation), but also because they themselves must undergo a transformation and, each in its own way, be "saved." The destruction, on which such stress is laid, that is, the immolation of burning by fire, contains unquestionably a meaning with regard to the man who offers but it possesses also another, quite particular meaning: the objects of sacrifice themselves become participants in the act and cannot remain unchanged, intact. A sacrifice without the gift of some object would be incomplete. A sacrifice that is solely spiritual could be valid only for a pure spirit, and even so, pure spirit would have no right to cut itself off from the rest of creation. For Man and all that is connected with him, however—and the same applies to the cosmos, which aspires equally to reach its final goal—an immaterial sacrifice is not sufficient. Water, earth, fire, oil, wine, milk, flowers, fruits, animals, even the air (breath)—all these are objects used in worship and involved in its action.¹²⁵

The Sacrifice of Man

We have said above that the activity of religion par excellence is adoration. This is true, on condition that one understands by this not only a purely autonomous action but one that is the expression of a total and loving abandonment on the part of Man, an abandonment

SB III.5.1: "Preparation of the Boma altar with the high altar" (J. Eggeling, *The Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa. Part II. Books IIII and IV*, Sacred Books of the East Series 26 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1885], p. 111).

¹²⁰ *RI'* X.94.

¹²¹ See, for example, the beautiful hymns:

- to the sun—Surya: *RI'* I.50; VII.63; Savitṛ: *RI'* I.35; II.38.
- to the dawn—Uṣas: *RI'* I.113; IV.51; VII.77.
- to the wind—Vayu: *RI'* X.168.
- to the forest—Aranyani: *RI'* X.146.

¹²² Things that are thus divinized are never isolated from one another, either in Man's thought or in the worship that he offers to them. They form part of a whole that cannot be isolated from human life and to which thought is not directed merely at certain fixed hours. From morning to evening, from birth to death, these things, this material cosmos, are intimately bound up with the life of Man.

¹²³ The texts of the *Gṛhya-sūtra*, especially those concerned with the principal *samskāra* (sacraments), are very characteristic in this regard. See *jatakarmāṇ* (birth), *upanayana* (initiation), *vivaha* (marriage), *antyeṣṭi* (funeral rites)—where water, fire, earth, and the sun form together a divine presence inherently associated with these important stages of a man's life.

¹²⁴ In the *Garuḍa-purāṇa* I.202, the *avatāra* (here numbering nineteen but generally they number ten)—that is, the descendants of the Divine in bodily form—are also termed *murti*.

¹²⁵ See P. S. Deshmukh, *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, Harvard Oriental Series 31 and 32 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925); G. K. Ray Chaudhuri, *Hindū Customs and Manners* (Calcutta: Mazumdar, 1888).

that constitutes as far as he is concerned an essential element in the sacrifice. Adoration is as it were the soul of Man's sacrifice, but the perfection of this latter presupposes also the participation of those parts of Man that are, strictly speaking, not specifically concerned with the practice of worship, just as the whole of the cosmos takes part in the plenary sacrifice. Furthermore, every act of adoration is a sacrifice, though an incomplete one. In the act of adoration Man recognizes his total dependence upon as well as his subordination to God; in sacrifice, which is a complete and perfect religious act, he does far more; he not only adores, he enters into God, abides in him and transcends all dualism, without however falling into monism, for by "perfect sacrifice" we mean not only a gift but the acceptance of that gift, and when God accepts he also completes and perfects.

It is the whole man that participates in sacrifices, not only his intellect or his spirit. God desires, certainly, to be worshiped in spirit, but also he wills to be worshiped in truth, and the truth is that Man is not spirit and spirit alone and, even more, that God does not wish simply to be adored: he also desires that Man should be united with himself.¹²⁶

So long as the various rites and ceremonies do not lose their strong links with the essential in worship, it will follow that they remain part of this worship, but it is nevertheless the spirit of Man, manifesting itself and expressing itself through sentiments and gestures, that occupies the first place.

Rites and Ritual

These words, which conjure up ritualism or vain formalism, have a poor press in our day and age. It is far from our intention to propound here a defense of ceremonialism. If we retain the terms (as does the Catholic Church, which still terms a large part of the liturgy "ritual"), it is because ritual is an essential part of worship that it is very difficult to name otherwise—unless, perhaps, the expression *sacred action* or *holy action* be adjudged to render sufficiently accurately its meaning.¹²⁷

There are a vast variety of rites in this world, which brings us into communication with transcendence,¹²⁸ dances,¹²⁹ festivities, festivals in general, different blessings, consecrations

¹²⁶ For an introduction to the different branches of Hinduism, the following may be consulted: J. E. Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India* (London: Constable, 1926); M. K. Gandhi, *Hindū Dharma*, ed. B. Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950); S. C. Nandimath, *Handbook of Virasaivism* (Dharwar: L. E. Association, 1942); S. Kumaraswamiji, *The Veerasaiva Philosophy and Mysticism* (Dharwar: V. R. Koppal, 1949); T. Rajagopala Chariar, *The Vaishnavite Reformers of India* (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1909); S. K. Aiyangar, *Early History of Vaishnavism in South India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920); S. Shivapadasundaram, *The Saiva School of Hinduism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934); T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Sir Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Sri Vaishnavas* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1923); S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1958); P. C. Chakravarti, *Doctrine of Śakti in Indian Literature* (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1940); S. N. Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1924); V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Lalita Cult* (Madras: University of Madras, 1942); etc.

¹²⁷ See J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, vol. 1, chap. 3, pp. 104–73, for a good review of Indic rites with corresponding bibliography.

¹²⁸ See the various articles in vol. 4 of *The Cultural Heritage of India*: R. C. Majumdar, "Evolution of Religio-Philosophic Culture in India"; Yatiswarānanda, "A Glimpse into Hindū Religious Symbolism"; L. A. Ravi Varma, "Rituals of Worship"; B. Bhattacharya, "Festivals and Sacred Days"; Pavitrānanda, "Pilgrimage and Fairs: Their Bearing on Indian Life"; etc.

¹²⁹ "An English Colonial Minister has declared that the Mau-Mau movement came into being

(for example, of priests or kings, even of *devas*), domestic offerings, vocal prayer, ejaculatory prayer (*japa*), the *Aumkara*, *Om*,¹³⁰ and so on.

The *samskaras* or sacraments are rites that have a direct bearing upon that life that is "beyond." Consequently, they are customarily performed at the moment of birth, at puberty, marriage, purification, at the taking of life vows, and at death. It is, precisely, in the sacramental sphere that the real meaning of worship is to be found. Worship without a sacrament would be somewhat like sacrifice without a gift and without the grace that is given in response (that is to say, without the sacramental response) and would be indubitably incomplete, unfulfilled.¹³¹

There is no complete sacrifice without communion—that is to say, without response corresponding to the gift that has been made, in other words, without a gift from God's side in return. And because God in accepting the sacrifice does not make another gift (which would be a new oblation; God does not sacrifice), but rather gives himself, the sacrifice reaches its culminating point in communion—which latter admits, moreover, various degrees both of community and of identity.

Rites are rites because they contribute to the sacrifice of creation. The creation is the sacrifice of God, for God not only brings existence into being, that is, creates it, but in addition he wills that creation should return to himself. He has, in fact, *designed* this return. Now, to consent to an existence that is self-restoring is, in Christian parlance, to grant it immortality, to divinize it. Rites perform the function of finalizing this sort of exchange.

Inner Intention

It goes without saying that true worship is as far from being an empty formalism as it is from being discarnate subjectivism. Worship is neither magic nor spectacle; no more is it confined to be on the material plane nor a purely spiritual intention. It is inseparable from its own expression; nevertheless it is that which is expressed that constitutes the foundation of all worship.

Without *śraddha*, without faith,¹³² without confidence and purposeful intention, the act of worship is doomed to failure. The world of matter and the human body form part of the sacrifice, no doubt, but two further points need to be taken into consideration. *First*, the spirit also is a human and terrestrial reality and thus a given factor that must not be excluded from sacrifice. It is even of first importance, being the most precious "thing" that it is possible to offer. A sacrifice without spiritual offering would, if it could still be deemed a sacrifice at all, be a poor sacrifice, an act of worship void of spiritual content, even a hypocrisy. *Second*, the spirit is not only the most precious of all gifts, it is also the sole element that effects the

because Christians had been deprived of the freedom to dance" (Th. Ohm, "Die kultischen Elemente in den afrikanischen Stammesreligionen," in M. Schmaus and K. Forster [eds.], *Der Kult und der heutige Mensch*, p. 108).

¹³⁰ The publication of a study comparing *Om* with *Amen* as regards basic meaning and etymology is much to be desired.

¹³¹ See, for example, A. S. Altekar, *Education in Ancient India* (Benares: The Indian Book-Shop, 1934); J. N. Farquhar (ed.), *The Religious Life of India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916–); S. V. Venkateswara, *Indian Culture through the Ages*, vols. 1–2 (London-Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928–1932); P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, vols. 1–5 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930–1962); J. Woodroffe (A. Avalon), *Principles of Tantra* (Madras: Ganesh, 1952); R. Tagore, *The Center of Indian Culture* (Adyar: Society for the Promotion of National Education, 1921); E. Wood, *The Occult Training of the Hindus* (Madras: Ganesh, 1952); R. K. Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education* (London: Macmillan, 1947); Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1955).

¹³² See BU III.9.21.

accomplishment of the offering and the actual worship. A mere accumulation of material gifts does not constitute an act of worship. If the spiritual factor is missing, one cannot speak of human worship. In other words, if there is no inner intention of the spirit, there is no sacrifice. Man is not made up only of spirit; it is, however, his spirit that makes him a man and distinguishes him from the other creatures.¹³³

Let us not confuse, however, the spiritual element in Man with his awareness nor, even less, with his self-awareness. As a spiritual being Man is certainly *conscious*, and he can be to a greater or lesser degree conscious of his *self*; but he is not purely and simply consciousness. It follows, therefore, that the intention—that is to say, the element of awareness in an act of sacrifice—is not the same thing as reflective personal intention. If a reflective intention is presented, it can bring about a deeper awareness of the sacrifice and, according to circumstances, perfect the inner intention of the act, but it is not indispensable. The intention is not necessarily a reflective intention. For example, alongside a community consciousness or collective consciousness there is a normal and ex-static functioning of the intention that is determined by an object, without any awareness of the fact that it is the spirit that is taking the initiative. The spirit, to be sure, can possess knowledge and awareness of the fact that it is performing an action full of meaning, but it can do so without reflecting on *its own* intention. A too-minute examination of its own action could even damage the purity of the worship, while a certain element of detachment and self-abandon enhances the creativity of the liturgy. One who is too aware of his own self cannot be an instrument of God. We must not forget, in fact, that worship is not a purely human endeavor. A too-self-conscious participation would engender disorder and distraction. In order to perform the liturgical task, it is of vital importance to forget one's self, to give oneself to be utterly identified with the action. If one is paying too great attention to the directives, one will with difficulty preserve that freedom of mind that is desirable in order to let oneself be led by God. The spirit of faith and a sense of worship are of greater value than conscious intention, however efficacious this last-named may be on other occasions.

Plenitude in Worship

Man, in that he is a mesocosm and has a threefold nature composed of body, soul, and spirit, is not only a performer of worship in collaboration with or subordination to God; he is also the sanctuary, even, we might say, the passive recipient of worship. Worship concerns Man and the cosmos at one and the same time, for both are offered together. Yet Man is also and in addition the sacrificer or, to be more exact, the co-sacrificer in this theandric action. Consequently, the participation of Man in worship is twofold: Man both performs the sacrifice and is himself sacrificed. The sacrifice does not take place only in the cosmos or on the spatiotemporal altar loaded with sacrificial objects; on the one hand, it takes place within Man, in the depths of his soul, and on the other it passes through him. Even with regard to Man, worship is both immanent and transcendent.

Thus, a plenitude of worship involves the whole man. It demands all from him: his total *availability*, his attention, his emotions and intentions—in short, his unreserved participation and self-offering. As a plenary sacrifice, Man is the offering, the altar, and the offerer.

Sacrifice is Man. It takes place in Man and through Man. The man of faith, who through his attachment to the Absolute, lives totally free—because he believes, hopes, and loves—has

¹³³ According to *SB VI.2.1.18*, Man is the first among the animals, possessing this essential distinguishing feature, that he is the sole one to be able to perform sacrifice.

made of his existence an act of worship. His life is adoration, cooperation, prayer, activity, contemplation and action, love of both God and his creatures. In worship Man is at one and the same time passive and active, receiving help and giving help, spectator and actor. He is part of that unique theandric action that enables him to exist and to be.

WORSHIP IN HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

If you knew the gift of God . . .

Jn 4:10

Hitherto in our study we have endeavored to present Hinduism in a perspective that, without distorting the Indic spirit, was intelligible nevertheless to the mentality of the West. We have never made specific reference to Christianity. To this we now direct our attention.

There is a threefold question that Western Christians—and all Christians, even those born in India, are, by and large, spiritual sons of the West—will have continually been asking throughout this study:

- What significance does all this have?
- What meaning or what values does the Indian concept of worship have for Christianity?
- Are there any “growing points” that may permit a cross-fertilization?

It is to these three queries that we would now like to respond.

The Meaning of Worship in Hinduism

Throughout this inquiry we have been endeavoring to lay bare the meaning of worship in Hinduism. Here we can do no more than indicate certain lines of thought with the aim of making this meaning intelligible to Christianity.

Methodology

To reach an understanding of the meaning of Hindū worship we have the choice of two paths: translation and conversion.

Translation

This path consists in an attempt to translate truthfully not only single concepts but also ideas and sentiments. It is possible, certainly, to arrive in this fashion at a certain understanding of another religion. Mankind possesses but one nature, and this latter permits us, by means of a correct translation, to fathom phenomena that are alien to us.¹

¹ “It is to a translation, therefore, rather than to an enforced assimilation that we should be

If, however, his work is to have any value at all, the translator must penetrate to an understanding of his question in depth and discover, as St. Thomas Aquinas said, the *res significata*.²

Contemporary Christian theology lays emphasis in biblical exegesis upon "figures of speech." The real question is how to transfer into modern speech expressions peculiar to some ancient text. Now, the letter is one thing, the spirit another. It is necessary, therefore, to make every endeavor to understand what the author desired to say. To do this, it is absolutely essential to know the intention, circumstances, background, general context, and finally, the language of the author.

We are eagerly desirous that this same method should be followed in the study of other religions. Myths, symbols, intuitions, presentiments, rudimentary notions, spontaneous convictions are all important elements to be taken into the reckoning in order to make a fair assessment of any religious complex.³

Yet this path presents a pitfall: one is in danger of jumping to the conclusion that all is well when a punctilious and accurate translation has been produced, without troubling oneself either to interpret or adapt. This happens not infrequently. One translates *dharma* by morality, or *karma* by action or *pūja* by worship, or *deva* by Gods, and the version obtained by so doing is, perhaps, literally correct, but the thought of the author is not for all that rendered more accessible to his new readers. Indeed, if morality is understood in the Kantian sense of the word, if action is understood as a purely human activity and adoration as a superficial and external rite, if furthermore the word *deva* is understood simply as the plural of God, then the meaning of the text has not been transmitted and one has contributed very little to its intelligibility.

Furthermore, a formally correct definition of the different concepts does not suffice to translate their complexity. Man may possess diverse levels of awareness and more or less developed ways of perception. In the same way his hypotheses of speculation and his sense of values, even his existential capacities, may vary. If one speaks of myth and understands by it a sequence of events without verified links with history,⁴ the reader could well suppose that myth possesses a degree of reality inferior to that of history, while someone living in a mythical context would hold a precisely opposite conviction.

directing our attention." G. Schulemann makes this comment before replying in the affirmative to the question "Have Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism a meeting point at which, though their ways of expressing may differ, they are looking toward the same goal and a similar procedure, for attaining it?" *Die Botschaft des Buddha vom Loses der guten Gesetzes* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1937), p. 149.

² See, as a start, certain principles of St. Thomas: "Actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem" (*Sum. theol.* II-II, q.1, a.2, ad 2); "objectum fidei est res ipsa de qua fides habetur" (*ibid.*, q.1, a.2); "Sub verbis latent significata verborum" (*ibid.*, q.8, a.1); "Nomen non significat rem, nisi mediante conceptione intellectus" (*ibid.*, I, q.13, a.4, ad 1); "Cum nomina immediate significant conceptiones intellectus, quae sunt rerum similitudines" (*Compendium theologiae* 1.25); "Cujuslibet rei tam materialis quam immaterialis est ad rem aliam ordinem habere" (*De veritate*, q.23, a.1); "In nominibus est duo considerare: rem significatam et modum significandi" (*Scriptum super Sententiis* I, d.22, q.1, a.2); "Sciendum quod significatio nominis non immediate refertur ad rem, sed mediante intellectu" (*De potentia*, q.7, a.6).

³ Present-day African Christianity provides many very important examples. See *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (Paris: Cerf, 1957) and the special number "Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, Rome, March 26-April 1, 1959: The Unity of Negro African Cultures," *Présence Africaine* 24-25 (1959).

⁴ J. Sløk, "Mythos und Mythologie," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vl. 4, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), col. 1263.

Consequently, the recognition of figures of speech must not in itself, without various reservations, be reckoned a theological advance. This is, perhaps, no bad thing, for to understand the Christ, the apostles had no need of the subtleties of science; they were able in any case to put questions to him and did so frequently when the meaning of his words or one of his actions escaped them. Now, to understand the inner spirit of a religion, something more is necessary. St. Paul called it discernment, *voûg*,⁵ and Christ himself promised to send the Holy Spirit so that his gospel might be understood by all men.⁶ For Christianity the simplest term for this is faith. Now in order to essay an approach to some religious phenomenon that is hitherto unknown to us, a certain faith is essential. From the methodological point of view it must be recognized that no religious complexity (which is in any case a question of faith) can possibly be "understood" without a corresponding faith. It is only when Christian faith is capable of taking other beliefs into its embrace that the Christian is enabled to understand, appreciate, and assess them.⁷ This openness, which is both a preparation and a necessary condition for conversion, leads us to the second path.

Conversion

Nowadays the science of religions asserts from the outset that it is impossible to comprehend from the exterior the whole complexity of a way of thought that is hitherto unknown to one. The principles of law appertaining to the natural sciences are found to be inapplicable to the spiritual sciences. In these latter the subjectivity of the seeker cannot fail to obtrude, to the extent that their object, to be understood, must meet with a certain sympathy, a certain affinity. This is all the more true when it is a question of penetrating within a religion other than one's own—nothing other than a sincere conversion will do. Just as a Christian speaking with a believer of another religion has the impression that this latter only understands the gospel imperfectly and from the outside, so also the Hindû experiences the same thing with a partner in conversation of another faith. The Christian's objection that Hinduism is of the natural order whereas Christianity is of the supernatural does not carry very much weight. This distinction (we are not here speaking of the distinction defined by Vatican I between supernatural and natural knowledge⁸), in addition to the fact that it is not an integral part of Christian doctrine⁹ nor of particular value for Christianity in general,¹⁰ in no wise corresponds with the facts of the matter,¹¹ for we are speaking here in the first place of a human

⁵ 1 Cor 2:16.

⁶ See Jn 14:26; Lk 24:45; etc.

⁷ See E. Benz, "On Understanding Non-Christian Religions," in M. Eliade and J. M. Kitagawa (eds.), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 115-31.

⁸ "duplicem esse ordinem cognitionis in altero naturalis ratione, in altero fide divine cognoscimus..." (Denz.-Schön. 1795).

⁹ See the contemporary theological discussions on the supernatural.

¹⁰ "The traditional distinction drawn between revealed religions and 'natural' religions does not go very deep; it remains exoteric. All those religions in which we catch a glimpse of the divine are revealed. Christianity is not a religion of the same order as the others; it is, as Schleiermacher has said, the religion of religions" (N. Berdjaev, *Esprit et liberté* [Paris: Je sers, 1933], p. 107). See also J. Maréchal, *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), and, more particularly, vol. 2 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937), pp. 538-56; and O. Karrer, *Das Religiöse in der Menschheit und das Christentum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1936).

¹¹ See M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*; R. C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times*; Th. Ohm, *Die Liebe*

way of understanding (or anthropological, if one prefers) and only next of an ontological conversion in the sense not of a "return" but of an "ascent." In other words, it is not a question of return to a negative or inferior form, but of accepting and assuming all that one is able to integrate because it is already implicitly contained in the more perfect faith. Now, is such a conversion possible without renouncing one's own religion?

In our particular case we deem that an affirmative reply is legitimate. Such a conversion is theoretically possible from a double point of view. The universality of the Christian faith—faith in Christ the only mediator, at work since the dawn of creation—permits a man to be in communion with that deep foundation of truth that is to be found in each religion and to view things with another man's eyes. In this way differing positions are transcended, the ecumenical goal is on the way to being reached, and faith is deepened. Furthermore, the existential character of Hinduism that grants full liberty in the interpretation of its truths authorizes me by this very fact to advance a "Christian" interpretation of its teaching. Such an attempt we have already termed an existential attempt at incarnation. Indeed, Hinduism, except in the case of certain essentialist or doctrinaire interpretations, whose only goal is truth and goodness—which is very tolerant toward adherents of other philosophical ways of thought and which welcomes the most diverse notions on the subject of the meaning of salvation—permits a man to be a Hindū while embodying in a fairly free form that existential characterization that constitutes his religion. In other words, it permits one to add to it, even bring it to fulfillment by the introduction of something new. To the Indian who says, "I am respectful of tradition, while interpreting its content in my own way: I lay stress upon truth and goodness, while conceiving these two 'values' differently perhaps from others; I have no wish to separate myself off, to excommunicate myself from the ancient 'religion'; I appropriate to myself the categories and concepts of that religion, because I find them to be inspired and hence universally valid, but I take the freedom to use them in my own way," Hinduism accords the right of affirming himself a Hindū.¹²

Hinduism is an existence and, more exactly, paradoxical though it may appear, a historical existence in that it is both traditional and humanist. Why is it that Hinduism as a doctrine is so well able to dissociate itself from time? Precisely because as regards its whole existence it is "essentially" linked to India, to her peoples, history, and tradition. On the other hand this same Hinduism is only an expression, an incarnation one might say, of an original fundamental religiosity that, just because India constituted another *oikoumene*, has been taken for the whole. If Hinduism could choose its own name it would without a doubt call itself a catholic (universal¹³) religion. If faith in Christ were to complete rather than contract this inherent catholicity, Hinduism would inevitably come face-to-face with the law of the cross as gateway to resurrection.¹⁴

zu Gott in den nichtchristlichen Religionen (Krailling vor München: Wewel, 1950); G. C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Mistica islamica* (Turin: SEI, 1960); etc.

¹² An idolater, an Advaitin, a dualist, a *bhakta* of any type and even an atheist can profess Hinduism without anyone being able to contest his claim to the name of Hindū. In the eyes of the dualist, the monist is accounted a deviationist and a bad Hindū, but a Hindū all the same. If a Christian of India took into his head to call himself a Hindū, it is possible that he would shock his brothers in religion but not true Hindūs, provided that he fulfilled all the conditions mentioned above.

¹³ As one might suspect, the word "Hinduism" is itself foreign. It was applied to the religious thought of India by English scholars in 1830.

¹⁴ Which does not mean that certain Hindūs, who have already given Hinduism a content of their own choosing, would not have reservations on this point.

The meaning of worship that we have discovered in Hinduism relates, so it appears to us, to orthodox Hinduism. However, it has not only an intrinsic importance, but one that has relevance for Christianity also.

Thus our response to the first question could be as follows:

1. Worship in Hinduism can be described in the first place as that which permits a man access to the immutable depths of human existence. Just as ancient Greece enriched the European spirit with her *logos*, which subsequently became a characteristic of Christianity, so India speaks to the condition of contemporary Western Man by defending in a paradoxical manner the primacy of action—not, to be sure, of superficial activism or technical expertise of violent productivity, but of action in the essential meaning of the word, of holy action, action that cooperates with God. The Greek *logos* was by no means a Christian concept, yet Christianity assimilated it to itself, perfected it, and finally saved it. Even if the *karman* notion of the Hindū does not correspond precisely to the Christian concept of action, it provides nonetheless a foundation for a deep Christian liturgical life. Indian worship presents itself to the active and creative spirit of the West and reminds the modern world that it is not activity in itself nor even activity brought to completion that counts, but rather that it is only holy action, ever-conscious of the sacred, that truly possesses meaning and real value. India is more than a country of acosmic contemplation; it is a sacred culture, a land of worship. India, maybe, will never succeed alone in imparting a full supernatural meaning to modern work. It is here that an encounter with Christianity could be extremely valuable, in allowing her to discover herself, in revealing her to herself. Being thus more aware of the contents of her faith, she would then be enabled to expound it more fully. Such a meeting would be rich in possibilities for either side.

2. In order that modern man should better appreciate the meaning of worship, it is necessary that the "translation" of it that he is given should express well its inner core and situate this worship where it belongs.

3. For a profound penetration into the meaning of worship, a conversion is required such as is being ceaselessly renewed—a conversion, finally, that is less a conversion to traditional Hinduism than to the true values of life, to truth itself, to Christ, to the Lord. Hinduism today could undoubtedly have a unique role to play even at the heart of the Christian economy of redemption.

An Example: The Symbol

Let us take a characteristic example to illustrate what has just been said.¹⁵ Christian theology has witnessed a number of controversies that have not been successfully resolved by an equitable "translation." We may call to mind the disputes of the Fathers on the meaning of hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) and person (πρόσωπον, *persona*) and discussions on the "Filioque" that went on into the Middle Ages. An armistice, however, is not the same thing as peace, and scarcely do external pressures diminish before division rears its head once again. Church history teaches us very clearly that a pure and simple translation does not suffice to produce unity and a deep understanding of things nor, therefore, a mutual enrichment, let alone a more perfect synthesis.

¹⁵ The mass of literature that has appeared on this topic demonstrates clearly its relevance to the spiritual life of our times. We shall not give a bibliography, but point out in passing that our ideas on this subject take a middle path (even, we hope, bridge the gap) between the historico-psychological approach and the ontologico-magical interpretation.

*The Symbolic Character of Beings*¹⁶

In relation to the symbolic properties of both material things and, more so, religious realities, the history of Christianity seems to exhibit a certain malaise,¹⁷ as if the philosophical foundations of Greek origin that Christian doctrine adopted were inadequate for their task.¹⁸ In this regard the Indic contribution is not without interest.¹⁹

The gravity of the problem is due to the fact that the ultimate cause of this malaise touches a vital point—or even the bedrock, we might say—of Christian theology and human speculation, namely, the relation between God and the world, between the absolute and the relative. If we desire to translate this situation into Western metaphysical terms, to see in it the problem of “being of beings” of “the one and the multiple” (the *ἐν καὶ πολλὰ* of Plato), language itself reveals the chief difficulty of the undertaking. At first sight it would appear that the difference is primarily to be found in the *unity* of being and the *plurality* of beings. Now, according to Indic theology, it is God, the absolute, *brahman* who, insofar as one can say anything about him at all, is *sat*, being;²⁰ beings, on the contrary, are not considered as a plural of being, but as *bhūtani*, meaning entities *that-have-become*.²¹ One observes that the words that denote being and beings have completely different roots.²² From the start, the distinction between being and beings does not have its origin either in plurality or quantity. This is why neither monism nor dualism can be adjudged plausible attempts at a solution. Being and beings are neither *one* nor *two*.

¹⁶ This section appeared as “Der zerbrochene Krug. Zur indischen Symbolhaftigkeit,” *Antaios* 4(6) (March 1963): 556–71.

¹⁷ The “classical” notion of a symbol has been a constant source of difficulty from patristic times up until our own. Evidence of this is given by an African priest. See V. Mulago, “Le pacte du sang et la communion alimentaire, pierres d’attente de la communion eucharistique,” in *Des prêtres noirs s’interrogent*, pp. 186ff.

¹⁸ It is not for nothing that the terms *συμβολή* and *σύμβολον* seem at the start to have been juridical notions in Hellenism. See A. Pauly, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, G. Wissowa (ed.), 2nd ser., vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1931).

¹⁹ These reflections could also perhaps be of use in a study of the question of *analogia entis et fidei*. India may well have something to say in the discussion between Karl Barth and Erich Przywara, just to cite two names. However, we cannot embark on a theological elaboration of this subject.

²⁰ We know that the word *as* (cf. *esse*, εἶναι) means to be, to exist, to be present. See also *satyam* “such as it is,” the truth as fact (*satva*): the essence (of something) as distinct from its existence (*satta*); this latter could also be called *astiva*, the fact of being (*asti*).

²¹ The vast number of meanings derived from the Sanskrit root *bhu* (to become, come to birth, arrive, take place, exist, be found) and the application of it to ontic and ontological states defies all enumeration. Cf., for example, *bhūti* (cf. φύσις), birth, production, existence; *bhūta*, a thing, that which has come to be, that which has passed away; *bhūman*, fullness of being and also earth, world (that which possesses *bhu*); *bhūmi*, the earth, the ground, foundation, a place of rest; *bhūya*, becoming, future (cf. *bhuyastva*, etc.); *bhūtata*, reality, truth in the sense of the efficiency of things; *bhūtasta* (cf. in German, *stehen*), ontic consistence, that which is inherent, that which enables things to retain their identity (Paramatman, God); *bhava*, perhaps essence, the essential core of being, the factor that causes something to be itself; *bhava*, existence, the possession of being, the fact of existence, etc. We intend to publish when occasion offers a detailed study of Sanskrit ontological terms.

²² The roots *as* and *bhu*, normally translated by “being,” regarded as static in the first case and dynamic in the second, their meanings being connected with those of εἶναι, φύσις, and γίγνομαι refer properly speaking to a universal religious experience polarized by the relations God-world, creature-creation, absolute-relative, being-non-being, static-dynamic, etc.

It is at this point that the role of capital importance played by the symbol comes clearly to view. Only the symbol, which is a category of metaphysics (and, properly speaking, of metatheology) is capable of giving an adequate reply to this first question. The symbol preserves the existential character of things without prejudice to their being. It is the *constitutive* bond linking the world with its cause and also the *facultative* bond linking the cause with the world. The symbol transcends that plurality that we have just mentioned as a distinction between Being and new beings by expressing a polarization at the heart of the *all* that is not to be defined in terms of number but that is symbolic in character, a polarity that we find already, or could find, at the heart of *things* themselves and even at the heart of the *absolute*. The symbol, in fact, is that which separates the world from God and at the same time links it to God. It is the expression of a distinction (which both separates and unites) within being and in the very bosom of the divine.

Out of the three analogous polarities that we have just mentioned (in the all, in things, and in God), India has experienced the first in depth, has paid attention to the second to a small extent, and has succeeded only in catching a glimpse, hopefully, of the third. Christianity, on the other hand, has always been familiar with this last-named polarity. It has received or, rather, believed it. It has succeeded, more or less, in working out the second and has ignored, or almost, the first, so that both these latter have remained in a quasi-sterile condition.

We will describe briefly and schematically this triple polarity. As the second assumes a philosophical character and is positioned between the other two, we will attempt in the first place to describe this constitutive polarity of existential being. In order that a being may be itself, it is necessary that it should in a certain fashion be in possession of itself, that it should *have* its own "being." This "having," however, is not added as an extra; it represents a certain development, a possession of the aid being. Insofar as it *is*, the being expresses itself, precisely according to what it is. This expression is its symbol. There is no such thing as a being without a symbol. It is the symbol that confers existence upon a being, for the symbol is its expression, the extraction of it out of nothingness, the drawing forth of it (ex-tension) into being, the selfhood of the being. It is the symbol alone that permits it to "possess" its being. The being is only such as it is in accordance with the degree it possesses of inner orientation, that is to say, of intentionality. This intentionality that constitutes the being is the expression of its selfhood. This inherent polarity is the symbol of the thing. For the personalized being, the chain of reasoning is even more striking. The person is "himself," he is his own "I," precisely because he is in possession of himself. This possession is the reflexive unfolding of his selfhood, which takes place in acts of awareness as well as in acts of love. Now, that of himself that a person loves and knows is the symbol of his being. The *ob-jec-tum* is the *symbolon*, and that not only in the realm of accidental knowledge but in the most intimate core of each being.

With regard to the intrinsic relationship subsisting within the Christian Trinity (to which we have referred in third place; polarity with God), we have the testimony of the whole of tradition. The *logos* is the *eikon*, the symbol of the Father. The thing symbolized (the archetype) is the original, but the image, while infinitely different from the source, is nonetheless and at the same time infinitely (that is to say, absolutely) identical to it. Instead of the word "image," one might say, "inner expression." The symbol is not a copy; it is neither exterior to nor alien to the original; it is the sole and unique light of the light; it is the *ex-pression*, that is, the image *ad intra* of the original—in other words, the Son.

Now, Indian wisdom, *mutatis mutandis*, discovers this same symbolic property in the first polarity, namely, in the relation of things to God. To say that things are symbols of the absolute thus signifies *on the one hand* that they are not unrelated to being, that what they

intrinsically are only the expression of a single identical being, an image *ad intra*, as we were saying just now, since they have no background, no screen on which to project themselves as if on a reality exterior to themselves. (In spite of the *ex nihilo sui et subjecti* of Christian doctrine, the Greek idea of *materia prima* looms large in Western thinking.) This means that there are not two "realities," and hence there is no dualism. "One—simply—without a second!" is one of India's Great Utterances.²³ Nevertheless, *regarded from another point of view*, the symbolism indicates that there is an unbridgeable abyss between the symbol and the reality to which that symbol refers. The latter is in itself unattainable; it can only be reached in the symbol. Thus, monism can not correspond to reality, for the symbol by the fact of its very existence (by reason of the fact that the symbolized entity has need of a symbol) indicates precisely that the symbolized remains forever transcendent, forever "other," forever different and ungraspable.

In order to reply to the question as to whether India applies the Christian Trinitarian doctrine to the relation between God and the world and falls by so doing into pantheism, we would have to investigate more closely the Hindū idea of the symbol. Unfortunately the nature of our present task precludes our expatiating at greater length on this metatheological question.²⁴ So we are obliged to have recourse to a concrete couple that will provide us with an excellent illustration of our point.²⁵

Hellenistic and Hindū Formulations

The doctrine of the sacraments, particularly that of the Eucharist as Christian theology has endeavored to define it, manifests a certain ambiguity: it oscillates between two systems, that of the Platonists and that of Aristotelians.²⁶ It is well-known that the Christian conception of sacraments is one of symbols expressing a supernatural reality. An inquiry into the underlying notions of the Indic conception of symbolism might well constitute for traditional doctrine a precious new growth in its theology, capable of presenting the Christian mystery in a new light and one that is more satisfying than that presented by Platonic and Aristotelian thought-categories.²⁷ However, this adoption of Indic theology would necessarily presuppose a conversion on the metaphysical plane that is not always realizable.

²³ *Ekam evadvitīyam!* (CU VI.2.1).

²⁴ India stresses so strongly the distinction between God and the world that the symbol (the creature) is to a certain extent obliged to stop being a symbol if it wills union with the thing symbolized. The result of this is that it is not pantheism but to the contrary the exclusiveness of God, that is to say, theonism, that constitutes the pitfall of Indian thinking.

²⁵ See the following text of Christian Scholasticism that we quote in preference to an Indic writing in order to preclude in advance the smallest possibility of misunderstanding: "Respondeo dicendum quod in Verbo importatur respectus ad creaturam. Deus enim, cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. Verbum autem in mente conceptum, est repraesentativum omnis eius quod actu intelligitur. Unde in nobis sunt diversa verba, secundum diversa quae intelligimus. Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum eius est expressivum non solum patris, sed etiam creaturarum. Et sicut Dei scientia Dei quidem est cognoscitiva tantum, creaturarum autem cognoscitiva et factiva; ita verbum Dei eius quod in Deo patre est, est expressivum tantum, creaturarum vero est expressivum et operativum" St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* I, q.34, a.3.

²⁶ See the beautifully expressed statement of M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 4/1, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten* (Munch: Hueber, 1957).

²⁷ See, for example, C. Vagaggini, *Il senso teologico della liturgia* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1957), I.1.2. See also the English (abbreviated) edition, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1959), pp. 19ff.

The basic notion, in its rough-hewn state and prior to receiving the necessary finishing touches, would be somewhat as follows: the things and events of this world are for Plato all symbols (in the sense of manifestations) of a higher invisible reality in which they share. The symbolic content of things indicates at one and the same time the reality that is imparted to them and their own actual nothingness. It is upon this Platonic concept that St. Augustine takes his stand in his attack upon the Donatists: they certainly possess the sacraments of the church—that is to say, the true symbols of salvation—but their virtue, their reality (*res*), properly speaking, has escaped from them. The symbol is not the whole; it is a sort of invisible soul. It is by no means a definitive state, but contents itself with providing a reflection and imitation of it.²⁸ The Eucharist is the symbol of Christ; it is perfectly real qua symbol, but in the life eternal there will no longer be sacraments, because the symbol will have ceded its place to the full reality. Thus the objects we see around us conduct us, if we know how to view them rightly, to a higher and different plane of which they are the expression and the symbol. For Plato, it is the symbol that constitutes the earthly existence of things. Each thing is in itself only a symbol. That which is symbolized, accordingly, because the intermediary world of ideas.

Aristotle endeavored to preserve the reality of created things, and one can well understand how later on his theory won a greater success in the doctrine of the sacraments than of his master. Accordingly, he tried to transfer the real essence of the things of the *τόπος οὐράνιος* to the interior of the things themselves. Things as such are now no longer only symbols, but substances—in other words, realities—which though compounded of power and action are nonetheless things possessing an entity. The power of the symbol resides less in its purely ontological character than in the value of the knowledge it conveys, which must be interpreted naturally in a realistic manner. For Aristotle, symbol means sign, and a sign presupposes a knowing subject. The existence of things is not diminished because they are known. Things are substances as well as symbols. We know the use made by Christian theology of this basic notion, particularly in the doctrine of the sacraments.²⁹ Nevertheless the sacraments are something more than Aristotelian symbols.

For Plato things are all symbols of the ideal, mirroring here on earth the world of ideas, but in themselves they are nothing; they are simply imitations. For Aristotle, on the other hand, they are real symbols, representing reality as far as that is possible on earth. In themselves they have substance, but as symbols, they remain representations only.

The two theories possess in common the fundamental characteristic of Western cultural thinking, namely, a separation between the heavenly and earthly realms.³⁰ This world is a mirror, a participation, a symbol (and Christian theology would add, a creation) of the other transcendent reality.³¹ One is aware at this point of Aristotle's influence. The notion that things are either substances, objects, or else signs, symbols, and pointers is one of the cardinal

²⁸ See "Perficiant in nobis tua sacramenta quod continent; ut quae specie gerimus rerum veritate capiamus" (*Postcommunio, Sabbato Quatuor Temporum septembris*).

²⁹ See H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit. L'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène* (Paris: Aubier, 1950); G. Söhngen, *Symbol und Wirklichkeit im Kultmysterium, Grenzfragen zwischen Theologie und Philosophie* 4 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1940); K. Prümm, *Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch für den Raum der altchristlichen Umwelt* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1943).

³⁰ Cf., for example, E. Castelli (ed.), *Filosofia e simbolismo*, *Archivio di Filosofia* 2-3 (Rome: Bocca, 1956), and Castelli, *Umanesimo e simbolismo*, *Archivio di Filosofia* 2-3 (Padova: CEDAM, 1958).

³¹ See a very Eastern commentary: "Thus the things which are in heaven incorporeal and invisible, are the true things; those which are on earth visible and corporeal, are called allegories, but not really and truly things" (Origen, *In Canticum canticorum* 1, *apud* H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, n. 26).

ideas of Western thinking.³² The *ratio* of the symbol resides in the sign (*signum*).³³ Properly speaking, one cannot say that the symbol exists, but rather that it indicates.

The problem having been formulated in this way, we first of all must seek to know what things *are* and not what they symbolize. The symbol is alien to the "reality" or at least is extraneous to it. Things are, before anything else, themselves, and only after that are they capable of signifying something or other. But what, exactly, *are* they? This riddle has not always been solved. If, however, it is stressed that things possess a certain self-consistency, then it follows logically that the link that connects things with God, their origin, does not take into consideration their symbolic capacity but only the fact that they are things. It does not belong to the essence of these things that they are symbols but solely that they are things referring to nothing beyond or other than themselves. Their connection with God finds no "hold" in them. Regarded from their side, this connecting link is, as it were, suspended in a void. If we consider the symbol exclusively as a speculative value, then things do not really penetrate the divine transcendence at all. On this presupposition, we would be obliged to reckon as pantheism the Indian attempt not to dissociate things from their symbols (*res et signum*). The logical distinction that India admits between the symbol and that which is symbolized³⁴ most certainly does not mean that God is not distinct from things but primarily and simply that this distinction cannot be extrinsic: outside of God and things there is absolutely nothing, not even a common denominator to which reference may be made in order to measure this distinction. Furthermore, it is precisely this very distinction that constitutes the unique and specific character of the symbol and hence even of things, which are simply symbols of the one whom, furthermore, nothing else can possibly symbolize.³⁵

It is true that St. Thomas Aquinas defined creation as *relatio quaedam*,³⁶ but the West has hardly taken up this assertion at all, and has continued despite it to see in this world a self-existent reality, practically autonomous at least qua substance.³⁷ The immanence of God, although it does not impair his transcendence, is never quite forgotten in the Christian context, but enters only a very little into the synthesis.³⁸ Eternal life begins in this present world with the

³² "Creatures possunt considerari ut res vel ut signa" (St. Bonaventure, *Commentarius in primum librum Sententiarum*, d.3, q.3, ad 2.

³³ See J. Maritain, *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1939); and Maritain, "Sign and Symbol," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937): pp. 1–11.

³⁴ Which might also be the implication of St. Bonaventure's "considerari."

³⁵ As regards symbolism relating to the universe in Islam, see Qur'an 2.118, 164; 3.190; 6.99; 13.2–3; 24.43–54; etc. See also, in addition, the rather negative verdict of R. Paret, *Symbolik des Islam* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1958), and the reply given to his book by T. Burckhardt, "Symbolik des Islam," *Kairos* 3–4 (1961): pp. 217–24.

³⁶ *Sum. theol.* I, q.45, a.3. See A. D. Sertillanges, *L'idée de création et ses retentissements en philosophie* (Paris: Aubier, 1945). The "relatio rationis" between God and the world is also authentically Thomistic.

³⁷ Christian mystics, however, right from the beginning up to our own day, have never forgotten this insight. Cf., for example: "All material and corporeal things, whatever they may be in the final analysis, are like shadows, without substance and consistency" (Origen, *De oratione* XVI, cited in H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, p. 65n25. "Mann soll Gott nicht als ausserhalb von einem selbst erfassen und ansehen, sondern als mein Eigen und als das, was in einem ist Gott und ich, wir sind eins. Das Wirken und das Werden aber ist eins. Wenn der Zimmermann nicht wirkt, wird auch das Haus nicht. Wo die Axt ruht, ruht auch das Werden. Gott und ich, wir sind eins in solchem Wirken; er wirkt, und ich werde" (Meister Eckhart, "Iusti vivent in aeternum," in J. Quint [ed.], *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, n. 7, pp. 186–87). "Creatio si autem sumatur passive, sic est quoddam accidens in creatura est quaedam habitudo habentis esse ab alio" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* II, d.1, q.1, a.2, ad 4.

³⁸ Cf., for example, K. Prümm, *Christentum als Neuheiserlebnis*, p. 416; A. Dempf, *Die*

bestowal of grace, *inchoatio, vitae aeternae*, but any description of it presents two fundamentally different faces: that of true eternal life which pertains to the absolute, to God in heaven, and that of earthly life which properly pertains to Man, to the relative, to the created. No doubt this outlook contains something true and essential, namely a recognition of the distinction between Creator and creature, but perhaps the importance of the constitutive relationship, the bond that exists between them and precludes one reckoning Creator and creature as *two* things, is not sufficiently recognized.³⁹ The affirmation *creatio ex nihilo* should be studied in conjunction with the affirmation *creatio a Deo*. Let us look now a little more closely at the Indic notion.⁴⁰

The Broken Jar

Indic theology has often been labeled pantheist, and people have spoken of the "primitive" picture it portrays of the world. There is admittedly a real danger here that should not be minimized but that does not fall within the scope of this work to examine. Let us rather apply ourselves to defining more exactly the conversion of which we have spoken.

Up to this point we have perhaps considered the symbol in too Western a fashion (a concession on our part to post-Cartesian "clarity"⁴¹). But the Indic view of the world as a symbol is based upon different presuppositions. First we must clearly state that the interpretation that follows is a personal one; second, that in order to serve the cause of ecumenism we are drawing from the first Western terminology. In fact we use the word "symbol" where according to the usage of Indic philosophy we should employ different concepts.⁴² Therefore we have already performed a certain "translation." Now comes the question viewed from the purely phenomenological angle.

Let us have recourse to a typical example of Indic philosophy, one that was possibly

Hauptform mittelalterlicher Weltanschauung (München-Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1925), p. 140; N. Berdjajev, *Esprit et liberté*, p. 75; H. G. Gadamer, "Symbol und Allegorie," in *Umanesimo e simbolismo*, Archivio di Filosofia 2-3, p. 24; etc.

³⁹ This has assuredly never been forgotten by the deepest stream of Christian tradition. Cf., for example, Meister Eckhart: "Notandum ergo quod nihil tam proprium quam ens ipsi esse et creatura creatori" (*Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 96 [LW III.83]). Further on, he remarks, "Habet enim creatura hoc ipso, quod creata vel creatura est, omne et totum suum esse a creatore, in quantum creator est, et e converso creator, ut creator est, nihil habet proprium nisi creaturam" (ibid., n. 152 [LW III.126])—this by way of comment upon the text "in propria venit" (Jn 1:11).

⁴⁰ Let us recollect here, even if only in brief, the central place accorded in Christianity to the resurrection of the body. It is indeed the dogma of the resurrection that demonstrates the insufficiency of the Platonist and Aristotelian doctrines as well as of the too-idealist interpretation of the Vedantine view. The antithesis there—here (spirit-matter in the new philosophy, transcendence-immanence in the old) must not be interpreted in favor of either one of the parties nor a mixture of the two. But, really and truly, would not Hindu symbolism have a word to say at this point?

⁴¹ See the following lines of an eminent doctor of Western mysticism, which are a sad commentary on the attitude of those who only like distinct, clear-cut ideas: "¡Oh mísera suerte de vida, donde con tanto peligro se vive y con tanta dificultad la verdad se conoce (up to this point John of the Cross, a man of his day, is very close to Descartes), pues lo más claro y verdadero nos es más oscuro y dudoso (here the disciple of Alcalá cannot disguise his Aristotelian training; cf. *Physica* I.1), y por eso huimos de ello siendo lo que más nos conviene (a mystical element here enters upon the scene), y lo que más luce y llena nuestro ojo lo abrazamos y vamos tras de ello, siendo lo que peor nos está y lo que a cada paso nos hace dar de ojos! (The word is here openly uttered!) . . . Y que si ha de acertar a ver por dónde va, tenga necesidad de llevar cerrados los ojos y de ir a oscuras . . ." (already he is showing his own mystical path), *Noche oscura* II.16.12. See also ". . . porque ya es ocuparse en cosas claras y de poco tomo, que bastan para impedir la comunicación del abismo de la fe . . ." (*Subida al Monte Carmelo* II.29.7).

⁴² For example, *pratika, vivarta, parinama, paramarthika, vyavaharika, cit, vidya, pramana, patra, atman, maya, nama, rupa, paroksha, pratyaksha, adhyasa, abhasa, citra, sat, asat, guna, mithya, shakti*, etc.

familiar to Aristotle and that is also found in Christian tradition:⁴³ that of the jar. According to Plato (though we admittedly simplify a little here), this jar is precisely what it is because it is the copy of a supraterrrestrial and transcendent jar. For Aristotle the idea of "jar" is specifically the "form" of the jar and, as such, is indestructible and capable of being represented in all "matter." The jar symbolizes either the idea or the form.⁴⁴ Thus it gives me the possibility of plumbing the depths of things, since both idea and form, though each in a different way, belong to the sphere of transcendence. Only by discovering its symbolic content shall I get to know this jar for what it is. A symbol (*σύμβολον*) is precisely that which "puts together," "connects," the transcendental reality and its present manifestation.⁴⁵ All is allegory, an allegory, most certainly, of the Supreme Reality, God, the Trinity.⁴⁶ By affirming that the jar is a symbol we mean that it recalls another reality of which it is properly the symbol.⁴⁷ What, then, is the thing symbolized?

What happens to the jar when it is broken?⁴⁸ Now this is where both the strength and the weakness of Western metaphysics becomes apparent.⁴⁹ The jar exists no longer.⁵⁰

⁴³ See Rom 9:21–23. See the study of Ph. Rech, "Der Kelch," *Antaios* 9(2) (1967): pp. 197–216, which highlights the universality of the jar symbol from another point of view. See also 2 Cor 4:7 and the Dead Sea manuscript *Hodayot* XI.3.

⁴⁴ "Idea enim graece, latine forma dicitur," rightly remarks St. Thomas (*Sum. theol.* I, q.15, a.1).

⁴⁵ If St. Thomas Aquinas's celebrated proofs of the existence of God have far less hold on the spirits of our time, it is indubitably because awareness of the symbolic is blunted in modern man. To consider things as effects is to recognize them as symbols—that is to say, as being something *more* than they appear to be. If this *more* becomes the *cause*, then we arrive at the proofs of St. Thomas (*Sum. theol.* I, q.2, a.3). For the Christian of the Middle Ages the world is a structure of signs, that is, of symbols; to "modern" science, on the contrary, it is no more than a system of laws.

⁴⁶ See C. Kaliba, *Die Welt als Gleichnis des dreieinigen Gottes. Entwurf zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1952). Although he opens up new perspectives in the field of Christian tradition, he pays little attention to the problematic that we are considering. The world is an allegory of the Trinity, certainly, but what is the degree of reality of such an allegory?

⁴⁷ "Symbol sagt ein solches 'Mit (sym-)' des 'Zueinander-Fallens (-bol, als von ballo)' zwischen einer Realität und dem ihr einwohnenden 'Sinn,' dass, einerseits die Realität selbst voll diesem 'Sinn' dient, indem sie ihm ausdrückt während, andererseits, ein 'Symbol in sich' doch diese Realität transzendiert" (E. Przywara, "Mensch, Welt, Gott, Symbol," in *Umanesimo e simbolismo*, Archivio di Filosofia 2–3, p. 49).

⁴⁸ See the astonishing and profound biblical expressions that would almost make us think that the "breaking of the jar" relates to a basic human experience: "And the mourners are already walking to and fro in the street before the pitcher has been shattered at the spring or the pulley cracked at the well" (Eccles 12:6), or "Which suddenly and all at once comes crashing down, irretrievably shattered, smashed like an earthenware pot—so that among the fragments not one shard remains big enough to carry a cinder from the hearth or scoop water from the cistern" (Isa 30:14). A commentary taking into consideration the intuition of depth-psychology would here be of importance.

⁴⁹ See out of interest the verses of R. M. Rilke, *Das Stunden-Buch* (Leipzig: Insel, 1905):

Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe?
Ich bin dein Krug (wenn ich zerscherbe?)
Ich bin dein Trank (wenn ich verderbe?)
Bei dein Gewand und dein Gewerbe,
mit mir verlierst du deinen Sinn.

See also the Christian source of Rilke's thought in Angelus Silesius:

Ich weiss, dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben,
werd ich zunicht, er muss von Not den Geist aufgeben. (*Cherubinischer Wandersmann* I.8).
Ich bin so gross als Gott, er ist als ich so klein:
er kann nicht über mich, ich unter ihm nicht sein (ibid., I.10).

⁵⁰ See a poem of Sully Prudhomme, titled simply "Le vase brisé":

Nothing remains but its fragments.⁵¹ Now, for the Western metaphysician, the idea of form of the jar remains intact.⁵² The Indian mind occupies itself neither with the Aristotelian form (μορφή) of the jar nor with its matter (ὕλη), but rather with its spiritual matter, if we may use this expression.⁵³ The first thing that springs to mind, once the jar is shattered, is specifically the identity of the inner space—*ghatakalā*—and the outer, cosmic space—*mahakāla*.⁵⁴ What, we ask, is the permanent, immutable element in the jar? The Greeks affirm that it is the *form* or, if one prefers, the *idea*; according to Indian philosophers, it is the empty space, in other words, the air, on which matter and form recline.⁵⁵ The jar is this inner space, the one being identical to the other.⁵⁶ The jar is the void, the limitation of space brought into existence for a particular determined function. The jar as jar can have two meanings, according to what one understands by the words "as jar." This little phrase may mean the jug as regards what constitutes the specific contingency of this particular jar, that is to say, its outward aspect, its appearance. In this case to the question "What is the jar?" one can reply in a very concrete manner, and one's reply will offer no "information" such as might be applicable to other jars.

Le vase où meurt cette verveine
d'un coup d'éventail fut flé, le
coup dut effleurer à peine:
aucun bruit ne l'a révélé.
Mais la légère meurtrissure,
mordant le cristal chaque jour,
d'une marche invisible et sûre
en fait lentement le tour.
Son eau fraîche a fui goutte à goutte,
le suc des fleurs s'est épuisé;
personne encore ne s'en doute,
n'y touchez pas, il est brisé.
Souvent aussi la main qu'on aime,
effleurant le cœur, le meurtrit;

Sa blessure fine et profonde,
il est brisé, n'y touchez pas.

See also the well-known poem of Wallace Stevens (*Selected Poems* [London: Faber and Faber, 1954]) "Anecdote of the Jar."

⁵¹ "Factus sum tamquam vas perditum," as Ps 30 (31):13 aptly says.

⁵² This theme of the broken vase certainly crops up time and time again. See a very telling example: "The Greek fable is similar to Philemon's jar that no thirst can drain, if one drinks with Jupiter—but he who, lacking respect for the God, breaks the jar under the pretext of seeing right to the bottom of it, and discovering the miracle, soon holds in his hands only the fragments. And it is fragments of myths that most often the myth-writers present to us" (A. Gide, "Considérations sur la mythologie grecque," in *Morceaux Choisis* [Paris: Gallimard, 1935], p. 185. Similarly, one knows the comedy of H. von Kleist, *Der zerbrochene Krug*.

⁵³ See the application of this idea in yoga.

⁵⁴ See Guṇāpada, *Maṇḍūkya-kārikā* III.

⁵⁵ "For the Greek it is essential to the vase *qua* vase to have such or such a form because this form is the ectype of the potter. For the Indian the shape is simply a variable boundary-line drawn in the utterly diffused state of non-being and becoming" (O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta*, pp. 59–60).

⁵⁶ I venture to affirm that Christ appears when the jar is broken. See Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Evangelia* XXXIV.6: "The light of the Word (in the Incarnation) is hidden in the flesh, as it were in an earthenware jar (*testa*), in order not to dazzle us" (quoted by J. Leclercq, F. Vandenbroucke, and L. Bouyer, *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. 2, *La spiritualité du Moyen Âge* [Paris: Aubier, 1961], p. 26).

This jar, as jar, is so fragile that no generalization can be made about it. Yet there may be a jar which as jar avoids this fragility, that is to say, has a universal value, possesses a certain consistence, and if anyone asks, "What is this last-named jar and what conditions must it fulfill in order to have the qualities just indicated?" India—differences between schools and philosophies being set aside for the moment—replied: the jar is emptiness, it is space, it is that space which is interior and perceptible.⁵⁷

We observe here one of the characteristic features of the Indic way of thought. The human spirit, in its quest for reality, finds itself constrained to conceive this reality as being immutable, permanent. To search for reality means, therefore, to search for immutability. Now, where is the immutable to be found? For Plato and Aristotle (and with them the nonmaterialists and even, strictly speaking, the materialists are in agreement) the immutable is to be sought beyond the knowledge of the senses, on the threshold of that knowledge that is knowledge of the intellect. Thus for Plato and Aristotle the immutable, the permanent of which we are speaking, is nothing other than the idea or form or, in Aristotelian language, the *formal cause* that represents the essence of things. For India, on the other hand, and particularly for Sankhya and Vedānta, the immutable, that is to say, the real, is to be found in the *material cause*. The prototype, however, is not its matter, as with the Greeks, but the underlying space. Both of these represent the purely passive potentiality of any being in relation to existence. If the demiurge is the efficient cause of the world, Brahman is its material cause.⁵⁸

This idea crops up time and again, one application of it being observable in our very example. Just as, in the jar, limitless space appears limited, although it is composed of one and the same air, in the same way Brahman appears as *Atman*, thus seeming to be limited, even though in reality all is only one and the same Brahman.⁵⁹

But what, queries the Westerner, is the jar? Is it this fragile jar that our eyes behold, or it is rather this idea, this indestructible form? Hinduism searching for a firm foundation and tending as it does to regard things from above, from the perspective of their ultimate state, is unable to recognize the jar as being either this earthenware jar visible to all or the idea of this said jar. When an Indian says "jar," he is not thinking of a particular jar, since any particular jar disappears when it is shattered; nor is he thinking of the idea or form of it, since that amounts to nothing at all minus the jug. Furthermore, just as the material jar can be shattered and stop being that particular jar (proof, this, that it is not the "true" jar), so also is the idea or form of the jar liable to be destroyed; directly one adopts the same procedure in the realm of ideas (which proves that the idea of the jar is not the "true" jar either). This is so not only because it is difficult in the absence of a jar to conceive an idea or form of one,⁶⁰ but also and primarily because the idea of a jar, directly inserted it into a context, behaves

⁵⁷ See the following text, which I quote without comment: "In der Nähe ist uns solches, was wir Dinge zu nennen pflegen. Doch was ist ein Ding? Der Mensch hat bisher das Ding als Ding so wenig bedacht wie die Nähe. Ein Ding ist der Krug. Was ist der Krug? Wir sagen: ein Gefäß; solches, was anderes in sich fasst. Das Fassende am Krug sind Boden und Wand. Dieses Fassende ist selbst wieder fassbar am Henkel Wandung und Boden sind wohl das Undurchlässige am Gefäß. Allein das Undurchlässige ist noch nicht das Fassende Die Leere ist das Fassende des Gefäßes. Die Leere, dieses Nichts am Krug, ist das, was der Krug als das fassende Gefäß ist Das Dinghafte des Gefäßes beruht keineswegs im Stoff, daraus es besteht, sondern in der Leere, die fasst" (M. Heidegger, "Das Ding," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1954]).

⁵⁸ Although it is no light task to reduce India to a common denominator, our formulation seems to be faithful to her spirit.

⁵⁹ Cf., for example, *BSBh* I.2.6; I.2.20; I.3.7, etc.

⁶⁰ See *BGB* II.16.

somewhat like a material potsherd. The idea of it as an object, a geometrical figure, or simply as a receptacle is made up of numerous "pieces," such as pitcher, jar, pot, drinking vessel, bottle, and so on. In the same way as my jar cannot be ultimately real because it is liable to be reduced to pieces, so also the idea of the jar (flask, carafe, vase, etc.) cannot be something precisely specified because I can divide it also into different concepts. To the question posed on Platonic lines, "What role in the world of ideas is played by the idea of the jar?" India will reply, "As secondary a one as an earthenware jar!"

For Indian thought at its deepest—and this thought will later develop into numerous philosophical systems—the jar is neither the idea of the jar nor the material jar as such, since neither the one nor the other is an absolute and both the one and the other are liable to be broken.

To reach the reality of the jar it is necessary to shatter and transcend both the "ideal" jar and the material jar. If it is essential that the jug be real—and real it certainly is—it can only be so in one way.⁶¹ For India the sole means to attain this end is once again sacrifice: sacrifice of the material jar (brahmanic period), sacrifice of the ideal jar (period of the Upanishads) and, finally, sacrifice of the possessor and even of the possession of the jug (*bhakti* period). One will "win" the jug either by ridding it of its limitations (when one breaks it in sacrifice), or when one recognizes it in its true reality as "*Brahman*," (the offering of the intellect), or, finally, by renouncing it (by self-abandonment, by the gift of the self⁶²). Sacrifice is, indeed, the sole way of "realizing" an object. Only through sacrifice do we attain the immutable. If the material jug has been smashed and if the idea of jug is likewise inconstant and nonexistent when the jug is no longer present, it follows that what remains is "air," "space," "ether," *ἄπειρον*, *vācuum*, *śunya*, *nirvāṇa*, *neti-neti*, *brahman*. We could sum up rather neatly in the following way: for Hinduism the jar is the absolute jar, identical to Brahman. One must shatter the earthen jar and disregard the fragments (they are unreal). For Buddhism it is only the fragments that are "real" (they searched only for the ashes of the Buddha); no "jar" exists.⁶³ It is, however, essential to rid oneself of these fragments as one would of some obstacle: they are *duḥkha*, suffering. For Christianity one jar (and one jar alone) exists, and this jar one will not obtain by scattering the different fragments but by reassembling them,⁶⁴ that is to say, by transforming them, salvaging them, giving them a new existence. It is this that imparts to the fragments their reality. There comes about a transition or an event, a divinization.

⁶¹ Let us recall one basic datum in the Indian worldview, viz., that degrees of reality are totally inadmissible, whereas there do exist degrees of truth, according to the depth of one's penetration into this unique reality. See O. Lacombe, "L'être dans le thomisme et dans le Vedānta moniste," *Les études philosophiques* 2 (1960): p. 234 (cf., on the other hand, Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta*, p. 211, for Ramanuja). This is why, for Śaṅkarācārya, creation has objectivity but not reality. See C.B. Papali, *The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya (pro manuscript)* (Rome, 1959), p. 11.

⁶² "A broken vase, by a process of transposition, passes whole into the beyond, whatever that may be." P. Mus, *Barabudur*, vol. 1, p. 137.

⁶³ See the verse cited as familiar by Candrakīrti in his commentary on *Traité de la Relativité* of Nāgārjuna (XLI.71.1/2):

Il n'y a pas de cruche
Au-delà de sa couleur,
Il n'y a pas de couleur
Au-delà du vent.

⁶⁴ "Colligite fragmenta, quae superaverunt, ne pereant" (Jn 6:12). This idea occurs frequently in the Fathers. See Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 55 (PG 90.543BC); St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 95.15; etc.

The jar is the "jar" symbol of the absolute, in the sense of appearance—distinctive sign, indeed, work—not of the idea of the jar but of the absolute as such. The thing is the symbol of this ultimate reality under the externals, as one might tentatively express it, of unreality.⁶⁵ I shall touch reality by breaking the jar and going beyond the idea of "jar," then by proceeding to annihilate the pieces of the one (the jar) and of the other (the idea of "jar"), by rejecting everything, casting all overboard and recognizing things for *what* they actually *are*: only a particular thing, a substance that represents or reflects being in a special and autonomous manner, but the absolute itself in its own manifestation. In other words, each and every thing is a limited and constricted figure of the absolute in such a way that true and perfect knowledge consists precisely in not finding the absolute within the vase, as if in a receptacle, nor seeing the reflection of the divine there as if on a sheet of ice, but in experiencing the vase itself, as Brahman and as absolute. No doubt the jar that I behold is the *true* jar, if I am *capable* of recognizing it as such, but it is neither matter, nor form, nor the idea of "jar," nor anything other than Brahman. A knowledge that does not embrace the ultimate subject cannot be termed complete, definitive. The jar qua vase is surely not the final reality (of this same vase). It would be sheer ontologism to put forward a conceptual theory of knowledge, just as it would be plain pantheism to take as a foundation a purely realist and rational knowledge. The philosophers of India have in fact sometimes fallen into this latter pitfall, but this need not always be the case.⁶⁶ At this point Indic symbolism has an important part to play.

The symbolic power of things, in the present instances, possesses a double meaning: things are neither *something-in themselves* nor are they quite nothingness, that is to say, illusion and sheer falsity.⁶⁷ So, as a result, we cannot say that they *have* a symbolic *value*, but that they *are* symbols, symbols of the absolute in an exhaustive and particular manner. Their particularity consists in this, that they are only symbols and not anything else; in other words, that they are nothing *in themselves*, for they have no *selfhood*. The selfhood of things is only an illusion, just as in the famous example the "serpent" is only a piece of rope.⁶⁸ Even if regarded as being *in* God, moreover, they are similarly nothing in themselves, for this fact of *being-in* does not imply any property of their own. Things are God insofar as they are symbols—but here the danger of modalism rears its head. Things cannot without further precision be termed manifestations, appearances, "modes" (*modi*) of the divine, for not only would we in this case slip into pantheism, but we would be according to things a certain self-consistency, that is, the status of being an appearance or mode of the divine. By calling from symbols, however, we are not only making them a *something* but an *of-something* or a *to-something*. All these expressions are, of course, imperfect and to a certain extent inadequate.

⁶⁵ See the expressive way the Spanish mystics have of designating the creature (particularly Man) by the "not-nothingness" (*nonada*). See the word *anonadamiento* as used by St. John of the Cross.

⁶⁶ "It is striking to observe that in his brilliant sermon on the 'source,' Origen compares the re-statement of the divine image in the soul to the restoration of a smudged picture" (H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, p. 36).

⁶⁷ According to the Scholastics of *Vedānta* the characteristic of beings is *sadasadanirvācāniya*, that is to say, inexpressible, indeterminable (*anirvācāniya*), that which is neither being (*sat*) or non-being (*asat*). Apparently, the expression *sadasadbhyanirvācāniya* does not originate with Śaṅkara. See, for example, *BSB* I.3.19; I.4.3; II.1.27; II.1.14; *BUB* II.4.10; etc. S. M. Dasgupta (*A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 443) takes *sat* and *asat* in a temporal sense; R. P. Singh, *The Vedānta of Śaṅkara* (Jaipur: Bharat Publishing House 1949), pp. 351ff., gives to *tattva* and *anyatva* the meaning of "value."

⁶⁸ See Guadapada, *Maṇḍūkya-karika* II.17–18; etc.

They are simply provisional formulations. God alone knows things as they truly *are*. We can know them in this same *truthfulness* only to the extent in which we share his knowledge. Furthermore, since in God there is no distinction, it follows that we participate also in his being, in his divinity. We only know the *truth* of things insofar as we are God, divine. Now, God knows only himself; he does not know things in themselves but he only knows them such as they are in himself, as parts of himself. One might even venture to say that he knows himself as "things." He knows nothing outside, because there is no outside and because such a knowledge would not be true and absolute.

Such is the Indian way of thought that was later called the Vedantine intuition. It is the experience of a nondualist vision of being, a preception of things not as objects (God has no objects-of-knowledge) nor as contents, but as attitudes and gestures of God.

Reverting to our particular theme, we may say that for India the symbol is the one and only, unique note of being of the absolute. To state that things are symbols of God seems to be a formulation acceptable to the majority of both traditions.⁶⁹ The Westerner interprets the phrase as an objective genitive: things are symbols of God, that is to say, pictures, reproductions; they are resemblances of God, and they also permit "us" via the knowledge of beings to reach an analogue knowledge of the attributes of absolute being.⁷⁰

India, on the other hand, interprets the above phrase as a subjective genitive: things are symbols of God, that is to say, God himself as epiphany, as thing, for this "thing" is nothing other than God under the "appearance" of the particular thing. This "presentation" is neither being nor nothingness, but, precisely, symbol.⁷¹ While in the former way of thought, things are symbols of God, in the latter symbols are things of God. In the first case I can know and discover things as being symbols of God, whereas in the second case I can know and touch God as being the symbol of things. For the West, the symbol is a sign. Now a sign presupposes two different things: on the one hand a subject with imperfect knowledge (a symbol is a thing for somebody who knows a given object only through something else) and on the other hand a certain foreknowledge of the given object (otherwise we would be unable to recognize signs as such). This latter condition supposes, among other things, that one can somehow or other recognize an object "before" the sign and independently of it.⁷² A true mystery cannot as such be a sign (a cross can be a sign of the passion, but the symbol of the cross summons up a reality—for it is a reality—which can only be unveiled if one understands by symbol something over and above and different from a sign).⁷³ For India the symbol is

⁶⁹ See St. Thomas, *Sum. theol.* 1, q.1, a.10.

⁷⁰ See *SU* 1.3, according to which God remains hidden in his attributes (*guna*). See the same idea in Dionysius the Areopagite, *Epistolae* 3 (*PG* 3.1069B), and in Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (*PG* 91.1049A). The divine monad is "hidden in his own epiphany."

⁷¹ When Christian tradition defines God as being and evil as non-being (see, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* III.7; *De potentia*, q.3, a.16, ad 3; *Sum. theol* 1, q.5, a.3, ad 2; etc.), it is meaning at the same time that the creature is neither being nor non-being—in other words, that it is "not-yet being."

⁷² "Plato never says that one spiritual reality is the 'image' of another spiritual reality: the relation εἰκών-παράδειγμα is that of the perceptible to the intelligible" (H. Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène* [Paris: Aubier, 1956], p. 34). The author supports his assertion with numerous references to monographs on the subject.

⁷³ The Pauline phrase referring to Christ as the *eikon* of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and hence symbol of the unknowable Being cannot be said to be putting him in the category of sign. It is not by chance that John never speaks either of Christ or of the *logos* as an *eikon*. If Christ were only a sign, he could be at most for us a model external to ourselves (*Vorbild*), never an internal model (*Inbild*), as

never, properly speaking, a sign. It is neither a means of knowledge nor something different from and independent of the object symbolized. The symbol is the reality itself, not however in its capacity as reality but, precisely, in its capacity as symbol.⁷⁴ The symbol is theophany or, better still, an *ontophanic*.⁷⁵ Beings are symbols of God.⁷⁶ Man here on earth passes like a symbol, as one of the psalms puts it.⁷⁷ He is, the Bible tells us,⁷⁸ a symbol of God, and in this it is followed by the Christian⁷⁹ tradition of the West.

It is interesting to note that "jar" is translated in Sanskrit by the word *patra* in both senses of the term. On the one hand he is a vessel, the container of a soul, a spirit, the *atman*, the bearer of a profound reality, or to express it more truly, of reality itself. On the other hand, he wears a mask that makes him an actor, a minister, a comedian. This container, his *persona*, must be flung away, must be destroyed in order to save the authentic substance, that is to say—however paradoxical it may appear in a Western tongue, his personality. Now if Man is a *patra*, it is quite clear that God or the absolute is not a *persona* in this sense. If history retains any freedom of action, let us avoid committing the same faults as the generations of days gone by with their discussions about πρόσσωπον, ὑπόστασις, οὐσία. In the eyes of India the human person is a *patra*, a container of God, a true person, a symbol of the absolute reality.⁸⁰

Application to Sacrifice

Let us now see what happens to these three diverse conceptions of the symbol when confronted by the Christian sacrifice.⁸¹ There is little point in stressing the fact that the sacrifice of the mass fits into no philosophical system and that no rational investigations

Christian faith declares (see Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; 2:20; Jn 17:23; etc.).

⁷⁴ *Pratika*, symbol, and *pratibimba*, idol, are connected ideas.

⁷⁵ *Abhasa eva ca* (*abhasa*: reflection; *eva*: only; *ca*: and) literally: "and only a reflexion" (BS II.3.50); the *jiva*, the soul viewed in isolation, is nothing other than a reflection of the Most-high. "It is neither directly the Highest Self, nor a different thing," says S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sutra* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 420. See the commentary on *abhasa* in the arts as picture, allegory, etc., of A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, chap. 6, pp. 139ff. The whole world is an *abhasa* of God, in the sense both of objective and subjective genitives.

⁷⁶ See *TMB* VII.8.1 (as translated by A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., p. 210): "The waters (representing the principle of substance) being ripe unto conception (lit. in their season), Vayu (that is, the wind, as physical symbol of spiration, *prana*) moved over their surface. Wherefrom came into being a lovely (*vama*) thing (that is, the world-picture); there in the waters Mitra-Varuna beheld themselves—reflected (*parvapatyāt*)."⁷⁷ See Gen 1:2: "Ex spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas."

⁷⁷ "Ut umbra tantum pertransit homo," says the newer version, while the ancient one was "Verutamen in imagine pertransit homo" (Ps 38 [39]:7). Origen was fond of this verse and even writes, very much à l'indienne: "The world we see about us is the *eikon* of the intelligible and invisible world, for truth is found in the world to come," *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, quoted by H. Crouzel, op. cit., p. 265.

⁷⁸ Gen 1:26; etc.

⁷⁹ See H. Merki, Ὁμολογίς θεῶν. *Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Paradosis 7 (Freiburg: Paulus, 1952); H. Willms, Εἰκών. *Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Platonismus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1935); etc.

⁸⁰ See the metaphor of an empty jar used by Meister Eckhart to express the receptivity of the soul vis-à-vis God: "Kein vaz enmac zweierleie trank in im gehalten. Sol ez win haben, man muoz von nôt wazzer üzgiesen: daz vaz muoz blöz und itel werden" (*Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*, in J. Quint [ed.], *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, p. 114).

⁸¹ See L. Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, pp. 132ff.

can pigeonhole the Christian mystery.⁸² Even so, *fides quaerens intellectum* seeks the help of philosophy and relies upon all the means Man has at his disposal.

The mass as sacrifice and sacrament is identically the same as the saving action of Christ in the passion, except in this respect: the time, the place, and the form (or outward appearance) of the event are not the same. The Mass, we may truly affirm, is the symbol of the action of Christ, just as the Eucharist is the real symbol of Christ. Now if the symbol had been merely an imitation and nothing more, tradition would not in that case have used the word, for it has always understood the sacrifice of the mass in a deeper and more intimate way: the eucharistic symbol *is* Christ himself. Moreover, if symbol simply signified repetition, one would need to query whether this repetition takes place at the same level as the original act or at a lower level. In the first case, that is to say, if the repetition is deemed to be substantial (we remind ourselves of Aristotle), the identity of the mass with the sacrifice of Christ would be broken, for we would then have a second act. In the latter case, however—that is to say, if the repetition is deemed to be accidental—then the mass would fail to preserve the substantial value of the original act. It would be a simple commemoration of the first act, repeating it in an ingenious manner, certainly, but without guarding the identity or being the vehicle of the efficacious power of the original act *ex opere operato*. Third, if symbol simply meant the same thing as *sign*, in that case also the identity would be abolished and no explanation would be given of the intrinsic efficacy (*opus operatum*) of the sign. If, despite this, we wished to maintain its intrinsic efficacy, we should relapse into magic. A sign cannot by itself effect anything. Consequently, if we are seeking an intellectual framework that permits acceptance of the Christian mystery, it is necessary in the first place that the symbol be identical to its original (Plato and Aristotle fall short at this point). It is necessary, furthermore, that the symbol should be of such a sort that the man who experiences it not as a symbol but solely as a “sign” should be consciously aware of the difference. In other words, it is only faith that can grasp this reality and grasp it not as sheer transcendence but, precisely, as being a symbol.⁸³ This does not mean that the symbol is deceptive but that it is invisible to anyone whose vision does not include a connatural and powerful element of perception (faith).⁸⁴

The symbol is this the “symbolized” thing itself and consequently more than a reproduction or sign or just an “appearance” of the particular thing. The mass is the symbol of the redemptive

⁸² It is quite clear that our reflections have no intention of exaggerating the differences between East and West. The Christian notion regarding the symbol seems to us fairly close to the Indic way of thought. Nowadays it is widely agreed that Christian patrology takes very little of its inspiration from Hellenistic sources.

⁸³ “*ut natus Jesus et credentibus manifestus, et persequentibus esset occultus*” (St. Leo the Great, “Sermo XXXII, In Epiphaniae solemnitate II,” in *Breviarium Romanum, lectio IV ad Matutinum in Epiphania Domini*).

⁸⁴ See a resume of the Christian notion: “Man kann Christus nicht anschauen, so wenig wie die Sonne. Er will gedeutet sein, seine Werke, Worte, Wunder sind allesamt Zeichen, deuten auf etwas hin, meinen nicht nur sich selbst, sie haben eine unendliche Tiefe, in die hinein sie locken und sie laden. Nur findet man die Wahrheit nicht (wie die Väter oft meinten—das war die Eierschale ihres Platonismus) *dahinter*, auf einer zweiten rein geistigen Stufe. Sondern (und auch dies haben die Väter ausgesprochen): das Wort ist Fleisch geworden, der ewige Sinn inkarniert *im* zeitlichen Symbol. Im Zeichen selbst ist das Bezeichnete zu suchen, in der Geschichte die ‘Moral’, im Menschen Gott. Keiner wird jemals die Menschheit Christi hinter sich lassen” (H. U. von Balthasar, *Das Weizenkorn. Aphorismen* [Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1953], p. 58). See Goethe’s poem: “Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft, die Sonne könnt es nicht erblicken.”

action of Christ, because it is in fact this same action, though realized in different conditions as regards form, time, and place. It is not a mere repetition, nor a subjective memorial nor just an imitation, but the actual event of the redemption in its totality. It is not, of course, the difference of time, place, and form that constitutes the symbol. The symbol is the Christ event that takes place, *sic, hic, et nunc* in the symbol and in the symbol alone.⁸⁵ For the man who does not have faith, the mass cannot be a symbol, but at most a commemoration. The symbol, furthermore, is not just simply the event that took place nearly two thousand years ago. A de-symbolized mass would leave behind it no trace whatever of reality. The historic act of Christ would disappear in the same way as his supernatural reality. The symbol is the entire reality available only to the one who himself shows a certain receptivity to symbolism. This reality is not separate from the symbol, but it is not imprisoned within it either. In "heaven" there will no longer be sacraments nor mass, not that reality on that plane is somehow purer or different but because the time-place-form element that is inherent to any symbol here on earth will exist no longer. The reality subsists and remains the same; if *our* symbol by which we live our life on earth exists no longer, the symbol in itself nevertheless abides; the Son, the immolated lamb that still lives, the sacrifice of the Son, second person of the Trinity, the symbol of the Father—all that eternally remains. Christ is not the "symbol" that leads us toward God but rather the *symbol* that links and unites us to him.⁸⁶

If I understand something as a symbol, that thing is truly open to me. When I regard the mass as a religious act or ceremony, I am not yet viewing it as a symbol. If I "see" (or, in other words, if I believe) the mass as the unique and nonrepeatable sacrifice of Christ, then it is for me what in truth it is, that is to say, a symbol, and I am perceiving the reality. I see beyond the multiplicity ("masses," times, occasions), for this latter (the multiplicity) does not in "reality" exist. Thus the symbolic way of seeing is truly the real way.

Let us throw further light on this question from another angle of vision by means of a psychological observation. Take, for example, a cultured European watching a play, film, or some other visual spectacle. Such a person will either always, barring collective psychosis, be aware of the fictional element or else his identification with the action will be passive or even unconscious. For this reason he will not attend the same show twice, except on aesthetic grounds. To know in advance the denouement of the play would induce boredom. Contrariwise, an Easterner, so long as he is not yet too "modernized," not only loses consciousness very quickly of the fictional element but also lives his own identity with the action in a very active fashion. The play becomes reality for him, winning the day over normal everyday reality, which ends by appearing to him insipid, even unreal. What does it matter if he knows in advance the issue of the drama? It makes no difference. The players are not Platonic-style symbols representing realities of a supra-terrestrial world nor Aristotelian symbols that affect the spectator at a particular point in such a manner as to induce, by identity of form, a catharsis. The reality of the actor (for here, too, people have a detailed knowledge of certain stars of the acting world) has nothing to do with his existence offstage; it concerns the symbolism of his role. The actors are, certainly, symbols, but it is their symbol-status that constitutes their reality; it is as symbols that they are what in fact they are. The symbols, one might say, become actors! Regarded in this light, Peter does not play the role of Christ at Oberammergau nor Sureshwar at Benares that of Rama; it is Christ who "plays" at Oberammergau and Rama and Benares in order to disclose a small portion of reality. There is no question either, we note, of identifying Jesus with Peter or

⁸⁵ See R. Panikkar, "La Misa como 'consecratio temporis.' La tempiteridad."

⁸⁶ See Jn 14:9.

Rama with Sureshwar. The one true reality is that of the symbol because it alone makes history. Without symbols the world's clock would not tick. *Non numero horas nisi serenas* is inscribed somewhere on a sundial.⁸⁷ The others are unreal!

Supplement

We are very glad to be able to say that, alongside the present interest accorded to symbolism in the fields of philosophy and in addition to a "critique of symbolic reasoning,"⁸⁸ there is also now coming into being a theology of symbolism. It is called for by all the theological reflection of our times on the mystery of God, by the doctrine of the sacraments, and even by Christian devotion, which is centered upon symbols in an essential manner. Besides, has there not always existed, although sometimes in these last centuries it has been hidden and implicit only, a Christian "science of faith" that is a sufficient demonstration of how essential and indispensable a theology of symbolism is?⁸⁹ Unfortunately this theology is "not yet written,"⁹⁰ at least to the extent that it should be in our contemporary moment.⁹¹

Thus it is highly desirable to explore in all its fullness the question of the symbol, not confining our attention to Christian art or mythical happenings, but treating it in depth as a theo-ontological subject.⁹²

Nowadays we are coming across several trends of thought tending in this direction, but we shall here do no more than linger awhile on the theological study of Karl Rahner, which we quoted earlier, for, as well as representing a serious attempt to restore to the symbol its original Christian meaning, it corroborates in its essence our own independent reflections. The fact that we are in agreement seems to me all the more significant in that the theological observations of Karl Rahner are completely independent of Indian speculation, just as we from our side knew nothing of his work. In this supplement we give a brief resume of the relevant points of his work.

"*Ipso facto*, every being is symbolic for this reason that, if it wishes to find its own nature, it is obliged to express itself."⁹³ Being is inherently plural, even in its unity, but this plurality is far from being uniform; it is, rather, a development of the original One. Thus, each being possesses within himself a symbolic property. The result is that the development is the expression of the original. "It is by this expression that the being finds its own identity so far as it can."⁹⁴ This expression is the condition, the requisite process leading to self-knowledge and self-discovery, and, equally, to self-disclosure to others, seeing that each being is knowable to the extent that it is itself symbolic on the ontic plane (in itself) and on the ontological

⁸⁷ "Dico lucidas, taceo nubilas," affirms another one.

⁸⁸ See H. Sedlmayr, "Idee einer kritischen Symbolik," in *Umanesimo e simbolismo*, Archivio di Filosofia 2-3, p. 76.

⁸⁹ We should recall here the names of Scheeben and Möhler.

⁹⁰ K. Rahner, "Zur Theologie des Symbols," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 4 (Einsiedeln-Zürich-Köln: Benziger, 1960), p. 309.

⁹¹ "Die Dinge meinen sich selbst und zugleich mehr als sich. Sie sind Erst-Seiendes und zugleich Symbol," justly observes R. Guardini, *Religion und Offenbarung*, vol. 1 (Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1958), p. 31.

⁹² It is unfortunately impossible for us at the moment to take into consideration an important work like that of H. U. von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, vols. 1-2 (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1961-1962).

⁹³ K. Rahner, "Zur Theologie des Symbols," p. 278.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

plane (for itself). In other words, "The symbol, properly speaking (a real symbol) is the self-fulfillment of the one being in a second according to the exigencies of its selfhood."⁹⁵

It goes without saying that the foregoing ideas find their basis in the mystery of the Trinity. Now the theology of the word undoubtedly constitutes the peak of theological symbolism. Therefore, if the *logos* is the symbol of the Father, the *logos* made flesh is the absolute symbol of God in the world, the humanity of Christ being the real symbol of the *logos*—using the expression in its intrinsic meaning of which we have been speaking. Karl Rahner proceeds to employ these principles for the doctrine of the sacraments, as also for the body as being the symbol of Man, so as to establish the theological connection of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Our particular concern, however, is above all to understand that the symbol is "a moment which is distinct, yet which is nevertheless inherent to the reality which is being manifested."⁹⁶ This statement brings us already to our next set of considerations.

Relevance for Contemporary Christianity

It is not our task to judge or to criticize the Hindū conception of worship. We do not think, on the other hand, that we can be reproached for presenting Hinduism in too favorable a light. What matters is not its deviations but its orthodox stream.⁹⁷ Would we ourselves find grounds for satisfaction in a description of Christianity that devoted itself to an enumeration of heresies and other aberrations?⁹⁸

First of all, we would like to allay the fears of those who, on hearing a belief other than Christianity described in a favorable manner, are immediately seized with apprehension on behalf of the latter lest its freshness and originality and its independence of other religions should be impugned. Apart from other considerations to which we shall shortly turn, it is absolutely necessary henceforward to realize that a number of ideas hitherto held to be exclusively Christian had in fact seen the light of day long before.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 290.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 311.

⁹⁷ We must be on our guard against a fault often committed among Christians, as also nowadays among Indians, and consistently refrain from comparing the purest aspect and the theory of one religion with the deviations and practical failures of another. Examples of this are perhaps unnecessary here. It is doubtless very difficult to be objective, for each man views his own belief from the inside and those of the other from the outside. To be completely fair, there has to be a "conversion," which does not, it may be added, mean an "apostasy."

⁹⁸ W. F. Otto maintains, not without reason, that the low esteem in which the Gods of the Greeks have been generally held arises from the fact that this old-time faith was judged solely on its more negative aspects. See *Theophania. Der Geist der altgriechischen Religion* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956), pp. 9ff.

⁹⁹ Cf., for example, the fundamental precept of the Christian law on love of the neighbor: "Ne percutias proximum etiam si ab eo provocaris, ne noceas ulli cogitatione vel opere, ne proferas verbum quod causet dolorem alii" (*Mattu* 11.161); "Neminem spernas, calumnias patienter tolteres, irato ne irascaris, maledicenti benedicas" (ibid., VI.47–48); "Haec est summa virtutum: tracta alios sicut vis te ipsum tractari; ne facias vicino tuo quod non vis ut vicinus tibi faciat. In placendo aliis vel displicendo, benefaciendo vel nocendo . . . normam sequetur homo iustam, si proximum semper videat ut se ipsum" (*MB* XIII.5571); "Gaude de prosperitate aliorum, etiam si tu ipse indigens sis" (ibid., XII.3880); "Etiam inimico hospitium petenti, hospitalitatem ne deneges; nonne arbores umbra tegunt homines qui excidunt eas?" (ibid., XII.5528); "Contumelias patienter ferto, iracundo noli irasci, maledictis non maledicta rependas, nec te percutientem percutias" (ibid., V.1270); etc. (translation into Latin by C. B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. 2 [Rome: Collegium internationale OCD, 1960], pp. 21, 76). This sentiment, however, is not only to be found in Hinduism. See also "When Chung Kung [Confucius] inquires

With regard to the contacts that took place between Hinduism and Christianity during the course of time, it can certainly be affirmed that the former had but slight influence on the latter.¹⁰⁰ On a deeper and different level, certain questions, however, present themselves for our cogitation. Suppose, for example, that the Hindū idea of sacrifice were taken as a model for the Christian conception.¹⁰¹ It is certain that from the Christian point of view, this hypothesis, whether true or not true, would in no way clash with difficulties of principle nor constitute an objection to the authenticity of the Christian sacrifice. If we desire to take the primacy of Christ in full seriousness, as also the universality and temporality of his reign, it is both natural and even desirable that "the One who is to come" should have had some "precursors and heralds."¹⁰² Furthermore, it is a classical principle of philosophy that that which is first and perfect should be the "cause" of that which follows.¹⁰³ If Christ is this First, this Perfect, then it must be conceded that he succeeded not only in accomplishing his own course but also in being the ontological cause of everything that finds its own actualization and fulfillment in the Christ event.¹⁰⁴ Thus we are not saying that the Christian mysteries are dependent upon certain others, but just the opposite—or rather that there is a radical dependence all round on the mystery that is primordial. Hence it is not at all surprising if they show points of similarity¹⁰⁵ with that mystery. We feel that further reflections on this theme, if we are permitted to follow them, may prove a source of enlightenment for contemporary Christianity on the move.

Return to the source, to the origin: this has been recommended and acclaimed by good theology since the very beginning. Now, Christian sources have so far and as a rule been understood in a very limited way. Tradition, certainly, is a classical source of *theologia locorum*, but tradition starts with Adam and the church, similarly, with Abel.¹⁰⁶ However, alongside

the meaning of *jen* the master replies: "Do not do to others what you would not wish others to do to you" (*Analecta confuciana* XII.2 [cf. also VI.28]). See the English translation of A. Waley, op. cit. See the Assyrian saying, "Do not act harshly toward your enemy: to him who harshly treated you respond with good; treat your enemy justly" (H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament*, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1926), p. 292, quoted in W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1, *Gott und Volk* (Stuttgart: Klotz, 1957), p. 51. See W. Baumgartner, *Israelitische und altorientalische Weisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933).

¹⁰⁰ See E. Benz, *Indische Einflüsse auf die frühchristliche Theologie*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhdl. d. Geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse 1951, 3 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1951).

¹⁰¹ Cf., for example, what we said earlier *re* Origen: "Thus you see that he is himself the altar and the priest and the victim offered for the people" (*Commentaria in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos* III.8 (PG 14,950BC), trans. into German by H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, n. 811).

¹⁰² Col 1:17 should be taken very seriously.

¹⁰³ "Primum in unoquoque genere et maximum est causa omnium eorum, quae sunt post, ut dicitur in II Metaphysicae (993 b 24–27)" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum Analyticorum* I, lect. 4, n. 16. See also: "In quolibet enim genere est primum id quod est per seipsum, quod enim est per se, prius est eo quod est per aliud" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super librum De Causis expositio*, lect. 21 [cf. *De Causis*, prop. 21]).

¹⁰⁴ See the whole of tradition from Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* V.9 (PG 3,823) to Thomas Aquinas: "Semper autem id quod est perfectissimum est exemplar eius quod est minus perfectum secundum suum modum" (*Sum. theol.* III, q.56, a.1, ad 3).

¹⁰⁵ Cf., for example, O. Casel, *Le mystère du culte dans le Christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1964); *Proceedings of the First Precious Blood Study Week, August 6–8, 1957*, Saint Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana, 1959; etc.

¹⁰⁶ See Y. M. J. Congar's supplement, "Présence et habitation de Dieu sous l'Ancienne ou sous la

the Old Testament we find another covenant, a cosmic covenant.¹⁰⁷ Even the history of mankind and in particular his religions also act as sources for theology. Let here be a return, then, to the origin where the divine *logos* expressed himself in the shape of announcements, inspirations, and warnings, where the divine compassion made living water spurt forth—a return to the sources, whence flowed streams destined to flow into the ocean of a full-filled Christianity.¹⁰⁸ The plenitude of times and seasons is also composed of temporal accretions coming from all the religions.¹⁰⁹

In this connection a study on Hindū worship can be of very great interest for Christianity. Our second question, we recall, was whether an inquiry of this type would prove enriching.

In Christ, it is true, "all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge are hidden,"¹¹⁰ but does this mean that the church has dug up and used the lot? In other words, even if Hinduism taught nothing new, it could help in the adaptation of these treasures to the church of today and even aid this latter in their rediscovery and development.

Furthermore, an interpretation of worship in ontological terms is not the exclusive privilege of India. Worship as such is always more than a psychological act aimed at rendering homage and thanksgiving to the supreme Being. It would be a diminishment of worship—and a sign of the new "humanism"—to see in it merely an act of devotion.¹¹¹ This would be not only to open the door to all attempts to explain worship and religion in general by psychology but also to distort its deepest meaning. To say, for example, that Man feels an inward urge to give glory to God and thus reduce worship to a psychological tendency is insufficient.¹¹² The need that Man has of worship arises from the very fact that his nature itself impels him to contribute toward the fulfillment of the world and thus to his own perfection. From the point of view of apologetics one may very well conclude that this need is the cause of worship, but in the realm of theology and indeed of theodicy it is proper and necessary to preserve the ontic order and seek the cause before the effect. Worship must not be regarded as if it were solely (or even primarily) a performance of Man; it is really Man's participation in the dynamism of creation's return to God. In other words, it is a divine work.

Worship (the French word *culte* indicates etymologically its underlying concept) is, as we have already affirmed, *opus Dei* rather than *opus hominum*; this latter corresponds better to the word "culture," which is nowadays so fashionable and which represents a lay form of

Nouvelle et définitive Disposition," in *Le mystère du temple*, pp. 310–42, and also his chapter "Ecclesia ab Abel," in M. Reding (ed.), *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche. Festschrift für Karl Adam* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1952), pp. 79–108.

¹⁰⁷ See Gen 6:18; 9:9; 9:16; Isa 24:5, and elsewhere, where reference is made to a covenant other than that concluded with Israel.

¹⁰⁸ See R. Panikkar, "Eine Betrachtung über Melchisedech," *Kairos* 1 (1959): pp. 5–17.

¹⁰⁹ See E. Przywara on the cosmic liturgy of the Chinese tradition (applicable in every respect to India also): "Sie sagt eine mystisch-metaphysische 'Macht in der Ohnmacht' . . . also adventisch zum Sakramentalismus der vollen Menschwerdung" (*In und Gegen* [Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz, 1955], p. 154).

¹¹⁰ Col 2:3.

¹¹¹ "Worship is a tribute of praise in a perceptible manner" (J. A. Jungmann, "Sinn und Probleme des Kultes," in M. Schmaus and K. Forster (eds.), *Der Kult und der heutige Mensch*, p. 2. "By worship we understand the manifestation of the inner life through perceptible acts" (W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1, *Gott und Volk*, p. 53).

¹¹² "It is a twofold desire, unfortunately often debased, that prompts man to offer sacrifice: a desire to pay respect to the sovereign power of the divine—and the more self-regarding desire, which yet remains a form of veneration, to unite oneself with this same power" (F. X. Durrwell, *La résurrection de Jésus*, p. 79).

worship (*culte*). Culture implies the use of tools and the ability to use them, because without them *Man* cannot *master* the world (and his own self). The instrument may be material (a pair of forceps, a machine) or spiritual (a concept, a thought). For this the price that he pays is the lack of direct contact. Culture is a sort of second nature. Worship, on the other hand, is the use that God makes of Man as an instrument (indeed, a divine instrument) for the work of redemption. Culture tends toward autonomy, whereas worship tends toward heteronomy; thus, in order that there may be a synthesis in which worship is a preponderating element, corresponding to the divine excellence, we need a culture imbued with worship or a fully aware and reflective worship such as emerges from ontology.

Let us see now with the help of three examples the profit that may accrue from Christianity's encounter with India.

The Liturgy: A Movement toward Wholeness

The liturgical movement of our own day has already renewed the life of the church, and so far it has taken nothing from Hinduism. Nevertheless, one may well wonder whether the astonishing attraction exercised upon so many Westerners by certain Eastern forms of spirituality does not stem from the impression of fullness and completion received from their liturgies—a wholeness such as is little known as yet in the West but that is manifest in full bloom in other religions. Moreover, the Christian effort that is directed toward making worship more relevant to life might well profit by the ancient but still lively traditions of India.¹¹³ The ontic bond that links together Man and the cosmos, the consideration of human nature in its entirety, body and soul being regarded as a harmonious and indivisible whole, the attribution of an increasingly deep and transcendent meaning to action—these are a few of the elements that could well be retained.

When we speak of a liturgical spirit, we are alluding to that state of soul in which the connection of every action with the supreme destiny of Man is apparent. This is, properly speaking, the sphere of Christian morals, but the average conscience of modern man tends to confuse morality with honesty and decent behavior (admittedly, two important qualities) and thus weakens the awareness of Man's full communion with the cosmos and with the absolute.¹¹⁴

This liturgical spirit draws upon an attitude of mind common enough in India, namely that reality is not to be grasped by concepts and therefore that salvation does not depend upon conceptual knowledge, but upon faith. Faith, moreover, poses very different problems from those of ordinary knowledge.¹¹⁵ It is not a question of recognizing that reality transcends our faculty of conceptual apprehension, which is scarcely in doubt, but, on the contrary, of fully realizing that an approach to the real and to salvation demands from us a total engagement and presupposes a discovery and actualization of reality.¹¹⁶ We need a full and complete liturgy,

¹¹³ See the remarks of E. von Severus, abbot of Maria Lasch (reported in *Herder-Korrespondenz* 11 (1956): p. 100), where he says, sounding an almost Vedic note, that "alle Werke der Christen erst durch die im Kult sich vollziehende Teilhabe am Gottesopfer 'gesegnet, angerechnet, vollgültig und genehm' werden können—Der Kult ist—die primäre Actio der Kirche . . . Daraus folgt, dass die Anakephaliosis, die Zusammenfassung der ganzen Kirche unter Christus als ihrem Haupt, sich im ganzen Leben jedes Christen nicht nur in der Kultteilhabe, sondern als Lebensteilhabe auswirkt." It is as this sort of participation that embraces the whole of life that worship should be understood.

¹¹⁴ The idea of the primacy of the liturgy is not confined to India. Africa furnishes several examples. See "Das sakramental-kultische Handeln steht als unmittelbar wirkende Lebenskraft in Vordergrund des Interesses," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr), I, col. 151, art. "Afrika."

¹¹⁵ See "Hoc est opus Dei, ut credatis in eum, quem misit ille" (Jn 6:29).

¹¹⁶ We do not deny that there exists in India a certain intellectualism and that this is the danger of

where the intellect must of necessity have its rights but where the primacy goes to action, to the full and holy liturgical action.¹¹⁷ Morals without liturgy would be naturalism, while liturgy without morals would be superstition. This, moreover, is confirmed by Christian tradition. When, for example, St. Augustine understands by sacrifice the complete self-offering of the human person,¹¹⁸ or when St. Thomas Aquinas uses the words "religion," "worship," and even "rite" interchangeably,¹¹⁹ their whole concern is to insist on the primacy of the liturgy.

By taking for our consideration a theme that is par excellence Christian, namely the proclamation of the word of God, we shall be enabled to grasp better what we have just been saying in the light of Indic thought.

It is well known that in India, even in our day and age,¹²⁰ the proclamation of Hindū doctrine always has an eminently religious character with fervent participation on the part of the people, whether in the temple or in the open air. In the India of days gone by, religious instruction was not a separate subject in the education given by the *guru* (master) to his disciples! In the *gurukula* (schools) and *vidyalaya* (universities), courses in secular studies were admitted on sufferance, but there were never "courses in religion." It was necessary, naturally, that the traditional religious training should also be imported, and therefore prayer, the chanting of hymns, and the reading and commentary of the Sacred Scriptures provided without doubt a lively learning process. The situation was analogous, in short, to that which Europe must have known at the very beginning of our modern times.

There is much thinking and writing these days on the subject of kerygma.¹²¹ People seek to discover the essential within the gospel message and endeavor, out of respect for its purity, to demythologize it or to translate it into metaphysical terms; that is, they endeavor to proclaim the kerygma stripped bare of all myth or precise dogmatic formulation.¹²² How may one succeed in affirming the Christian message in all its depth and fullness and at the same time in a clear and comprehensible manner? Quite a number of replies, though not for

Vedānta. But the silence of the Buddha in face of purely speculative problems is also very Indic.

¹¹⁷ "La liturgia non è immediatamente l'insegnamento di una dottrina, ma essa è lo stesso atto divino che salva. Ed è l'atto divino che fa il momento dell'incontro e unisce in qualche modo il tempo all'eternità" (D. Barsotti, *Liturgia e teologia* [Milan: Corsia dei Servi, 1956], p. 31). "We come to Mass primarily to do something, not to learn something" (J. Hofinger, "Catechetical Approach to Mission Liturgy," *Mission Bulletin* [Hong Kong], January 1959, p. 31).

¹¹⁸ "Quaerebas quid offerres pro te: offer te. Quid enim Dominus quaerit a te, nisi te?" (*Sermo* XLVIII.2 (*PL* 38.317); "Totum sacrificium ipsi nos sumus" (*De civitate Dei* X.6 (*PL* 41.284); etc. See these texts and others also in Y. M. J. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (Paris: Cerf, 1954), pp. 166ff., or again, "Te quaerit Deus magis quam munus tuum," *Sermo* LXXXII.3.5 (*PL* 38.508).

¹¹⁹ Cf., for example, *Sum. theol.* III, q.62, a.5; q.63, a.1 and a.3; etc. See the commentary of Y. M. J. Congar, op. cit., p. 185.

¹²⁰ It is only the Ramakrishna Mission and a very few other "modern" movements whose meetings give the impression of being "lay," even though these meetings begin and end with prayer and incense is burned before the holy pictures.

¹²¹ Here we are not thinking specifically of what is called the theology of proclamation nor of the quest for demythologization. Both originate in the same effort, namely, to overcome the situation we have described. We shall see shortly to what extent their aims reach the core of things.

¹²² See the formulations of R. Bultmann, which in this context are deeply meaningful. "Versteht man unter 'von Gott' reden 'über Gott' reden, so hat solches Reden überhaupt keinen Sinn; denn in dem Moment, wo es geschieht, hat es seinen Gegenstand, Gott, verloren. . . . Denn jedes 'Reden über' setzt einen Standpunkt ausserhalb dessen, worüber geredet wird, voraus" ("Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?" in *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 1 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1954], p. 26). See also, "In diesem Sinne aber von Gott reden, ist nicht nur Irrtum und Wahn, sondern ist Sünde" (ibid., p. 27). Karl Barth uses an analogous reasoning.

all that false; forget that the question thus formulated betrays from the start a weak point, namely, the tacit assumption that it is possible to present the message in a purely intellectual fashion, or with a view to greater wisdom, to present and publish this same message as one would a teaching tailored to the intellectual dimensions of Man. It is admitted certainly, and very properly so, that we have here a doctrine of salvation that a man can grasp only if he is fully open and ready to commit himself without reserve, but nevertheless scarcely anything other than its doctrinal aspect is taken into consideration. It is beyond doubt that Christianity contains a teaching, that it includes Christian doctrine, but this must also be added: first, one cannot say that Christianity is solely a doctrine (though it has one to offer), and second, one cannot say that the Christian message is simply the communication of this doctrine¹²³ (though it does contain such a communication). If several striking attempts at evangelization have borne scant fruit, it is because this second point has been too little considered. The doctrine, in the form in which it was presented, did not blend at all with the cultural backgrounds of certain peoples; it remained alien and inassimilable and hence unacceptable. It was discovered, therefore, to be necessary to initiate oneself as a start to the various forms of indigenous culture in order to be able to understand its categories and, subsequently, proceeding from there, to try and work out an adequate way of announcing the Christian message as a precise and clearly defined doctrine. This is the "tabula rasa" approach.¹²⁴

All is quite different if one considers that the place per excellence of the proclamation of the gospel is not the lecture hall nor the catechism classroom nor even the time-honored preacher's setting (from the elevation of a pulpit and removed from the place of sacrifice), but the liturgy itself understood as an event, as a meaningful act in which body and soul both participate. The liturgy is then an active contemplation, a sacred and intentional, if not always conscious, act in which the word fulfills naturally its own indispensable role.¹²⁵ It is not only the proclamation of an intellectual doctrine defined by a particular council. The event is not simply recalled to mind, but rather actualized in the here and now, for which reason it demands the adherence of our whole being, intellect, and affectivity. We become aware of a meaning and a responsibility. We are fully involved in the drama going on around us. Our unique position in the universe, which also comprises the intellectual dimensions of our ontological task,¹²⁶ becomes clear to us. The essential thing, however, is the revelation of the Lord and at the same time the appeal to our co-operation, our coredeemption.¹²⁷ The kerygma is one of the first and essential elements of the liturgy, being the vehicle of "the increase of the divine life."¹²⁸ Since, however, this increase

¹²³ "Neque enim fidei doctrina, quam Deus revelavit, velut philosophicum inventum proposita est humanis ingeniis perficienda," *Conc. Varic. I* (Sess. III); cf. Denz.-Schön. 1800.

¹²⁴ See the preface of A. C. M. Perbal to C. B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. 2, p. xi. The expression "basic evangelization" is also used.

¹²⁵ "Sacris actionibus erudita," says the liturgy (*Oratio, Sabbato post dominicam I Passionis*).

¹²⁶ "Echte christliche Verkündigung ist also eine solche, die Ruf Gottes durch Menschenmund zu sein beansprucht und die als Autorität Glauben fordert—damit ist gesagt, 1. dass christliche Verkündigung nicht die Vermittlung einer Weltanschauung ist, dass sie nicht allgemeine Wahrheiten vorträgt; 2. dass die Verkündigung nicht mit Belehrung verwechselt werden darf... Die Verkündigung wird auch säkularisiert, wenn sie ethische Belehrung ist; denn eine solche gibt es auch ausserhalb des Glaubens" (R. Bultmann, "Echte und säkularisierte Verkündigung," *Universitas* (June 1955): p. 701, and also in *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), pp. 124–25.

¹²⁷ "Sollen wir wesen, so müssen wir wirken und unser Wirken ist das ewige Wort hören," says the medieval Rhenish mystic Johannes von Sterngassen, *Gottes Wort hören*, quoted in A. Dempf, *Vom inwendigen Reichtum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1937), p. 26.

¹²⁸ M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, III/2, *Die göttliche Gnade* (Munich: Hueber, 1956), p. 233.

is not automatic, the liturgy to be efficacious demands from us the participation of our spirits. This happens, precisely, during the liturgy of the word.¹²⁹

It would be incorrect to conceive the kerygma as being something that *interposes during* the liturgy. It is an inspirational and essential element of the liturgy itself.¹³⁰ The liturgy of the word brings out the dynamic character of worship. The word, which is inseparable from worship, is always a response; the liturgical kerygma is always a call to cooperation, and this last-named in turn bids us to respond to the appeal and open ourselves to the kerygma. The "listen to my voice" is an essential element in the sacrifice when performed in its fullness.¹³¹ The Amen, or prayer, is an essential part of the liturgy. Between liturgy and contemplation there is no conflict, whatever one may sometimes think, but on the contrary a salutary tension that is simply the expression of a living unity.¹³²

When we speak of preaching within the holy place we are not precluding the word from also being proclaimed outside the liturgical celebration.¹³³ We would like to point out, however, that the proclamation that takes place outside the time and place of the liturgical celebration should never cut itself off from the living liturgy, which is, in fact, the rupturer of the time-space factor. To the foreign observations we would like to add that, in a certain sense (on which we do not wish here to expatiate more fully), the actual message to the *peoples* goes essentially hand in hand with the liturgy. The "Go, teach" is closely linked with "baptize."¹³⁴ Not, assuredly, that it behooves us to baptize straightaway, but we must hold it in our minds and spirits in order never to lose sight of the dynamic goal and purifying power that its message comprises. I announce to you not a doctrine but the message of a Savior; even more, I announce to you the Savior himself, who not only came in days gone by but is still living and present, even in this place.¹³⁵

We have seen that the existential demands for truth, which requires the removal of all obstacles capable of hindering a fully integrated religious life, is in Hinduism an indispens-

¹²⁹ "Das, was gemeint ist in der Liturgie der Kirche, aber nicht genug verwirklicht ist, ist die Begegnung mit dem Wort Gottes. Das Wort will gehört werden, nicht nur gelesen, sondern als Anspruch gehört" (E. Walter, "Glaube und Sakrament," in M. Roesle and O. Cullmann, eds., *Begegnung der Christen* [Stuttgart-Frankfurt am Main: Evangelisches Verlagswerk-Knecht, 1959], p. 181.)

¹³⁰ See the following highly pertinent passages for a theology of the Word: Tt 1:3 ("verbum suum in praedicatione"); Acts 13:26 ("verbum salutis"); Acts 14:3 ("verbo gratiae suae"); Acts 20:32 ("verbum gratiae ipsius"); 2 Cor 5:19 ("verbum reconciliationis"); Phil 2:16 ("verbum vitae").

¹³¹ See Jer 7:21–23, where the "audible vocem meam" seems to be of the essence of sacrifice. Furthermore, this is one of the Old Testament examples of the interiorization of sacrifice.

¹³² See the summing-up of J. A. Jungmann: "Worship is a sacred intercourse between Heaven and Earth, consisting in words and responses. It takes into purview the coming and return of God to God. Consequently and above all else, it is the response of man and of the community to the advances of God. This response is expressed first of all in prayer" ("Sinn und Probleme des Kultes," in M. Schmaus and K. Forster [eds.], *Der Kult und der heutige Mensch*, p. 4).

¹³³ It is of particular importance to remember 2 Cor 4:5 ("Non enim nosmetipsos praedicamus, sed Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum").

¹³⁴ Mt 28:19. See *ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁵ One may wonder with due caution and respect whether this Catholic notion of preaching as an element of the liturgy (and even of the sacrament) would not find itself in agreement with the Protestant doctrine on the Word of God. "Das Paradox ist dieses [to quote an extreme case], dass das eschatologische Geschehen in der Geschichte Ereignis geworden ist im Leben und im Tode Jesu und dass es je Ereignis wird in der Predigt [liturgy] der Kirche, die als predigende ebenfalls zugleich ein historisches Phänomen und jeweils eschatologisches Ereignis ist" (R. Bultmann, "In eigener Sache," in *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 3, p. 187).

able condition for adherence to the sacred doctrine.¹³⁶ It is exactly this same condition that Christianity also postulates.¹³⁷ From its earliest beginnings Christian tradition insists on the necessity, before hearing the doctrine, of reforming the life and purifying the heart.¹³⁸ How can a man accept Christ and welcome him under his roof without first taking him as a model? Only the spirit of a fully integrated liturgy can bring about that synthesis.¹³⁹

Jesus began by "doing and teaching," as the Bible tells us in speaking of the mission of Christ.¹⁴⁰ Tradition is already cognizant of the hierarchical order between doing and teaching. The "doing" of Christ was, most certainly, not an activism, but sacred action, a rite, and a sacrifice. It is, above all else, the "good pleasure" of the father that he comes to fulfill.¹⁴¹ He has received as his mission a work to accomplish,¹⁴² a Passover to celebrate,¹⁴³ a task to complete.¹⁴⁴ The primordial task of Christ, in which incarnation, death, and resurrection make up one inseparable whole, is to perform that holy theandric action in which Man—and creation—imitates God ontologically, that is to say, returns to God; and as such, a course that involves a more and more intimate participation in the very life of God up to the point of complete union *becomes* God.¹⁴⁵ Now it is this central action of the Lord that imparts to all rites, so far as they are authentic, their meaning and value; they constitute an imitation of God and are charged with meaning, since Jesus imitated in a perfect manner the Father. Participation in such an action as this is the ultimate meaning of the kerygma, and it is only because we are beings endowed with intelligence that this participation takes on also a pedagogic dimension. There is no doubt that the West, whether consciously or unconsciously, has spread many Christian *ideas* all over the world. It is to the West, certainly, that are owed contemporary discussions on social justice, the dignity of Man, liberty, and so much more that constitutes the more or less direct inheritance of Christianity. There is just one thing that the world has not learned, for the West has maybe discarded him: Christ himself, who alone imparts to ideas their salvific power. Christianity is for some nothing more than a Weltanschauung. In certain circles one finds a Christianity without Christ, so what wonder if there are peoples who proceed to seek Christ without Christianity.¹⁴⁶ The misunderstanding can also be viewed in this way: on the one hand, Christianity as a religion claimed to have the monopoly of Christ,¹⁴⁷ while, on the other hand, the other religions wanted to have the

¹³⁶ See BG XVIII.67, where it is expressly forbidden to speak of the highest wisdom to any who are incapable of renunciation, of an inner life, of devotion and kindness.

¹³⁷ Cf., for example, Jn 3:20; 5:44; 12:42ff.; etc.

¹³⁸ Cf., for example, St. Athanasius, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi* 56 (PG 25.193Dss.).

¹³⁹ The danger of an exaggerated spiritualization in worship is well expressed in O. Casel, *Le mystère du culte dans le Christianisme*, p. 144.

¹⁴⁰ Acts 1:1.

¹⁴¹ See Jn 6:38; see also Jn 4:34; 5:30; 9:31; 1 Jn 2:17; Mt 26:42; Lk 22:42; etc.

¹⁴² See Jn 4:34; 17:4; etc.

¹⁴³ See Lk 22:15.

¹⁴⁴ See Ps 18 (19):6 in its christological context.

¹⁴⁵ See Ps 81 (82):6 interpreted by Christ in Jn 10:35: "Si illos dixit deos, ad quos ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγένετο."

¹⁴⁶ W. Freytag ("Weltweite Mission," in F. H. Ryssel [ed.], *Protestantismus heute* [Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1959]) remarks very truly that this assimilation of Christian values without Christ "die nicht-christlichen Religionen in nachchristliche Religionen verwandelt . . . Sie alle glauben, über das Christentum hinausgewachsen zu sein" (pp. 217ff.).

¹⁴⁷ See Mk 9:38–40 as an example of this fundamental temptation of the church.

benefit of a Christ minus his historical incarnation.¹⁴⁸ Between the two, Christ goes on being crucified until the end of time.¹⁴⁹ This presents us with a burning theological problem that cannot be reduced to the political events that went into its making. This is nothing to do with understanding the political climate of post-Constantinian Christianity.¹⁵⁰ A renewal of the liturgical spirit is here also clearly a pressing need.

This argument will perhaps be further clarified if we proceed to our second example.

Orthopraxy and Orthodoxy

Without impugning the value of orthodoxy, we should like to suggest that the modern West would do well to endeavor to restore *orthopraxy* to the center of life.¹⁵¹ Orthopraxy is not simply good moral behavior. It consists, rather, in sacramental life and priestly awareness.¹⁵² The lessened awareness of symbols that pertains today has reduced worship to the rank of ceremony and has changed the meaning of the word *praxis*, by means of which the Christian collaborates in the salvation of the world, as also in his own personal salvation.¹⁵³ Orthopraxy has yet another meaning of the highest importance for the Christian West. It is capable of disentangling and straightening out the thorny problem of demythologization. There is nothing wrong with *de-mytho-logizing* when one's intention in so doing is not to destroy the "myth" but to place limits on the imperium of the "logos." India possesses myths, but ancient India knows no mytho-*logy*. This latter notion is already a contradiction in terms and betrays a thinly veiled rationalism. To approach myth by means of *logos*, to apprehend it rationally, is to destroy it. If one insists on regarding myths as being on the same plane as *logos*—in other words, if one insists on bringing the former into a logical relationship

¹⁴⁸ See the interpretation of Christ and Christianity given by Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Swami Sivānanda, S. Radhakrishnan, and many others.

¹⁴⁹ We are alluding to the famous work of Pascal: "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world; we must not sleep meanwhile" (*Pensées* [Paris: Garnier, 1964], p. 210).

¹⁵⁰ I have endeavored to present such a picture of Christianity in several of my studies. See *Religionen und die Religion* (Munich: Hueber, 1965, now in Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*); *Kerygma und Indien* (Hamburg: Reich, 1967); etc.

¹⁵¹ Orthopraxy by its very nature testifies to the primacy of action of which we have already spoken. See St. Thomas: "Cum Dei substantia sit eius actio, summa assimilatio hominis ad Deum est secundum aliquam operationem. Unde, sicut supra dictum est [I-II, q.3, a.2], felicitas sive beatitudo, per quam homo maxime Deo conformatur, quae est finis humanae vitae, in operatione consistit" (*Sum. theol.* I-II, q.55, a.2, ad 3).

¹⁵² See the remarks of W. Bühlmann to the Liturgical Congress of Nimègue, September 12–19, 1959: "It is our opinion that in Africa religion is not so much doctrine as action. It is a matter of practice rather than a profession of faith. During the initiation rites the candidate is not obliged to learn by heart certain abstract dogmas but finds himself plunged into the life of the ancestors; he hears their voice, allows himself to be buried, then brought to life again. He receives a new name and new clothing, for he is indeed a new man. Christianity affects these same goals in a deeper and more extensive manner, provided, however, it is presented not in the narrow guise that the Reform adopted but in its own ancient and biblical form to which the new liturgy points; so that it is less a doctrine than an event, less a collection of laws than a message of salvation capable of importing life" (quoted in B. Griffiths, "Liturgie in den Missionen," *Kairos* (Salzburg) (January 1960): p. 43. Cf., in addition, the article of A. Gillès de Pélichy, "Liturgie et missions en Afrique," *Rythmes du Monde* 8(1) (1960): pp. 20–36 (the whole number is devoted to the theme "Liturgie et Missions").

¹⁵³ We may mention here several studies that set out to reply to the question "What is a Christian?": H. U. von Balthasar.

with orthodoxy—one will be obliged to unite until myths disappear or until orthodoxy is abandoned.¹⁵⁴ Myth and *logos* do not belong to the same category. Once one has lost the key that will unlock such myths, one can no longer “contain” them in a rational and orthodox “mythology.” Now, without them mystery can no longer subsist, yet both find their rightful place not in orthodoxy but in orthopraxy. Religion is not only doctrine but life. Christianity is more than orthodoxy; it is also orthopraxy whose correlative is the symbol (or sacrament, if we prefer). One should not forget that the Holy Spirit, in lieu of a proper name that he cannot have (for he is not *logos*, but breath, Love, spirit), has one essential function and this is not only to induce understanding but to sanctify, not only to throw light on the word but also and equally to engage in action.

Orthopraxy is by no means opposed to orthodoxy—the spirit of Christ is certainly the Holy Spirit—but we must not forget that orthodoxy is only authentic when it is born of orthopraxy and nourished by it.¹⁵⁵ It is thanks to orthopraxy that Christianity is better able to encounter another religion than if it were to rely on orthodoxy alone. The world in all its diversity can only be saved through worship, the perfect theandric action. This is the goal of all the religions.¹⁵⁶

“Only by becoming brahman can one know brahman,” says Indic vision. One could add that only through becoming a symbol does one enter into the dynamism of the symbol; or, to put it another way, it is only by acting truly that one will know the truth.¹⁵⁷ This is the domain of orthopraxy, of sacrament, of mystery. Just as symbols are an essential element in activity, so sacraments are an essential element in a fully Christian life. Worship is orthopraxy closely bound up with orthodoxy.¹⁵⁸ It is through its awareness of the dimension of worship that contemporary Christianity is rediscovering the deep meaning enshrined within the act of worship. When we speak of the active participation of the people in the eucharistic celebration, we increasingly understand by the phrase something over and above the routine observances, as, for example, the singing, audible prayer, the responses made to the celebrant, the offertory, the kiss of peace, and even the communion. One realizes that in the Christian sacrifice each unites himself to Christ in order to save the world, preserve the cosmic harmony, contribute to the continuing life of the church, and participate in all the divine acts, including that of creation. In all this there are, of course, certain variations of emphasis, certain differences even, to be observed, but nevertheless the mass is declared by faith to be

¹⁵⁴ Károly Kerényi gives a quite different meaning to “mythology.” He understands it not as the connecting link between myth and *logos* but as *μῦθος λέγειν*, i.e., to narrate myths, stories. See *Umgang mit Göttlichem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), p. 38. See “μῦθος ist das Wesende in seiner Sage,” in M. Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ In a pluralist way to the theology of the mysteries, Christian devotions such as those of the Sacred Heart and the Holy Virgin and even that of the Precious Blood demonstrate this fact. See, for this last, *Proceedings of the First Precious Blood Study Week, August 6–8, 1957*.

¹⁵⁶ “The religious instruction in the mission countries is unfortunately still too concerned with the ‘learning’ of Christian doctrine” (J. Hofinger, “Catechetical Approach to Mission Liturgy,” p. 28).

¹⁵⁷ See Jn 8:46–47 and other texts. See, on this subject, R. Panikkar, “Die existentielle Phänomenologie der Wahrheit,” § IX, pp. 47ff.

¹⁵⁸ “L’insegnamento della Chiesa non è un insegnamento reocratico, o almeno no è solo questo. Non è dunque quello di Gesù (Mt 28:19–20) un pensiero che va contemplato, ma piuttosto un comando che deve essere osservato. Scopo del poter magisteriale della Chiesa è la santificazione delle anime nell’esercizio del culto divino” (R. Masi, *Il sacerdozio cristiano [pro manuscript]*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Rome, 1960–1961, p. 117).

the sacrifice of Christ,¹⁵⁹ "per quem omnia semper, Domine, bona creas, sanctificas, vivificas, benedicas et praestas nobis."¹⁶⁰ This is what we understand by the term "orthopraxy." The Christian celebrates the liturgy not *only* to praise and love the Lord, nor simply to perform his religious duties in company with his brothers, or to make himself or other people holy; he takes part in the liturgy with the aim of offering, or performing, the liberating sacrifice, that sacrifice that inaugurates the return of the cosmos to God and that begins even now to shape new heavens and a new earth.¹⁶¹ We are cooperators with God,¹⁶² co-performers in the same theurgy.¹⁶³ Sacrificial worship is the work that holds the world together,¹⁶⁴ which thing is assuredly only possible because Jesus Christ is in the last resort himself the sole liturgist and priest. It is he who *hic et nunc* performs the sacrifice in the mass.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, this sacrifice is a mirror, a sort of epiphany of the celestial liturgy,¹⁶⁶ both of them in fact constituting one and the same reality.¹⁶⁷ This source-idea, which is also authentically Christian, is very close to Hinduism.¹⁶⁸

It is observable that Indian Catholics who have very little contact with the spirit of the West have great difficulty in understanding the behavior of the majority of European Catholics who are usually termed "nonpracticing." Is it really possible to be a Christian or *aver oneself* to be such—they say with good right and logic—without taking a real part in the saving work of Christ? How can orthopraxy be dissociated from orthodoxy? How can one truthfully say, "I am a believer, a Catholic, and I willingly subscribe to Catholic doctrine, but I do not take part in the dynamism of the faith or in its practical observances"?¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁹ See *Conc. Trid., sess. 22, praesertim c. 2* (Denz.-Schön. 940).

¹⁶⁰ *Canon Missae latinae*.

¹⁶¹ The liturgy is "created by God and transmitted to men; it molds men into Gods," is the penetrating affirmation of Maximus the Confessor, *Commentaria in S. Dionysii Areopagitae Librum de ecclesiastica hierarchia* I (PG 4.116A).

¹⁶² See I Cor 3:9. "συνεργῶν," says the original text, which is a little stronger than "coopérateurs" (Bible de Jérusalem), "assistants" (Knox), "Mitarbeiter" (Rösch, Tillmann), "collaboratori" (Istituto Biblico di Roma), etc.

¹⁶³ "Co-liturgists in the same liturgy, in the same theurgy," says P. Evdokimov (*L'orthodoxie* [Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959], p. 76), which echoes the sentiments of the Fathers.

¹⁶⁴ Note the already known notion of *lokasagrūha* in BG III.20. The world is "put together again" by the holy performance of worship. It is only the holy *karman* that can do this. See also τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα [hoc quod continet omnia], Ws 1:7: "The wisdom of God holds the world together." See the use of the same expression for Adam (Ws 10:2) and for Christ (Col 1:1 and Heb 1:3).

¹⁶⁵ See, on the redemptive work of Christ in its historical and transcendent aspects, R. Guardini, *Der Herr* (Würzburg: Verkbund, 1951), p. 439.

¹⁶⁶ See C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gabalda, 1952), p. 72, where this is maintained to be the fundamental idea of the epistle to the Hebrews.

¹⁶⁷ "La liturgia terrestre e la liturgia celeste sono una stessa realtà e non differiscono che nel modo di manifestazione e di pienezza, come, nel concetto antico, l'immagine e la realtà che essa manifesta" (G. Vagaggini, *Il senso teologico della liturgia*, p. 203, where the author affirms that this conception gives rise to both the liturgical and patristic streams of tradition).

¹⁶⁸ "If our supernatural being is a 'shared likeness of the natural sonship of the word,' the worship which we offer to God can only be a shared likeness of that which he himself offers" (J. Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne* [Paris: Aubier, 1952], p. 325). This is a Christian expression of the Vedic intuition.

¹⁶⁹ The same line of thought is to be found in W. Bühlmann with regard to the African setting: "His religion is not a collection of dogmas but of religious practices and community feasts, so much so that a 'non-practising pagan' simply does not exist" ("Internationale Studienwoche über Missionskatechese," Eichstätt, July 1960 [taken from *Herder-Korrespondenz* 15(1) {October 1960}, p. 37]).

When we attempt to elucidate this Western attitude of mind, we must take due note, however, that the nonpracticing Christian does in fact prove by his very assertion that he still remains faithful to a certain orthopraxy. He is rejecting, in fact, only a form of orthodoxy that he holds to be decadent. Thus he thinks that he can remain a good Catholic morally, without, however, participating in a ceremony that has lost for him all ontological significance. Such is the profane and laicized notion of a purely moral religion that is an ersatz product substituted for worship. Man no longer realizes that a purely human activity, however well-intentioned it may be, is ultimately unproductive of salvation and that only the activity of worship, being ontologically linked with God, contains a redemptive element and real existential value.¹⁷⁰ To sum up, if authentic orthopraxy is eliminated from worship, true orthodoxy will finally sicken and die. Orthopraxy and orthodoxy are held closely together in a bond of union and solidarity.¹⁷¹

Here we may also refer to a very widespread idea according to which faith is understood primarily, if not exclusively, as a doctrine—that is to say, as a δόξα (and hence, δόγμα) to which it behooves one to assent—as if the Christian faith were more nearly related to orthodoxy than to orthopraxy, as if the word δόξα did not also mean splendor and glory and not only an opinion of a way of perception, as if faith were not, precisely, a lively and intelligent, conscious and fully human response to the free gift of God who, by making us participate in his very own life, makes us also participants in his light and his knowledge. Certainly, that a man may call himself a believer who admits the truth of what God has revealed, but only on condition that he does not forget, first, that the object of this revelation is the living person of Jesus Christ and, second, that the phrase “admit the truth” does not mean a purely speculative adherence but a true and existential conviction, a decisive laying-hold on the truth that is something more than a purely logical intuition. It is precisely because faith issues from orthopraxy that one can speak of what one *must* believe. If it issued solely from orthodoxy, one could well understand modern man’s resistance in the face of any obligation to believe.

So true is the above that even the Bible aligns itself far more on the side of orthopraxy¹⁷² than on the side of orthodoxy.¹⁷³ Holy Scripture is not a book of science, nor of metaphysics. It does not, properly speaking, consist of a body of doctrine, though we have the possibility and even the duty of discovering a doctrine within it. This doctrine presents a close affinity with the other distinction that Christian exegesis has always made between a solely scientific interpretation of Scripture and one that is Christian, this latter requiring to be carried out in the bosom of the church as a task of the church in accordance with the lines laid down by tradition. It is not a question merely of intellectual *doxa* but also of praxis.¹⁷⁴ The Scriptures

¹⁷⁰ We have here an intimation containing clear pastoral implications. To sum up, if authentic orthopraxy is eliminated from worship, true orthodoxy will finally sicken and die.

¹⁷¹ The famous passage already quoted, Mt 28:19–20, is simply a precept laid down in connection with worship: “... teaching them to *observe* all the commands I *gave* you. And know that I am *with* you always; yes, to the end of time” (see also Dt 4:5).

¹⁷² See the expression used in worship προσάγωγη, accessum ad Deum (Eph 2:18; 3:12; see Lev 9:7–8; etc. [προσέρχεται LXX]).

¹⁷³ “Die Schrift spricht überhaupt nicht viel von dem Wesen und Weseneigenschaften des Menschen, weil die Schrift mehr von dem redet, worauf es ankommt, und nicht von dem, was ist (H. Volk, “Freiheit als Frucht der Erlösung,” *Wort und Wahrheit* 15[8/9] [1960]: p. 489.

¹⁷⁴ “For the preacher, orthodoxy consists essentially in proclaiming the fact of salvation by faith in Christ crucified,” writes C. Spicq, *Spiritualité sacerdotale d’après Saint Paul* (Paris: Cerf, 1954), p. 92. He seems to be here denouncing the insufficiency of pure theory.

do not simply announce an event; they demand also that we should accept and welcome the message of salvation that they convey.¹⁷⁵

Christianity has always presented itself as an orthopraxy (as is evidenced by the saints) and as the divine life upon earth. This, too, is the sin of authentic theology in every age: to be a help toward attaining salvation.¹⁷⁶ Recent attempts not only to give a dogmatic basis to moral theology but also to treat it as an integral part of the totality from which it springs are directly related to our proposition.¹⁷⁷

Orthopraxy on its own and without the support of orthodoxy and relevant knowledge is liable to relapse into heteronomy and deteriorate into rigidity and superstition.¹⁷⁸ With authentic orthopraxy, however, there is of course no such danger.¹⁷⁹

Pre-Scholastic or monastic¹⁸⁰ theology was a discipline of life rather than of thought, although it did not neglect the latter.¹⁸¹ Indian theology might well prove a stimulant to the contemporary search for a fully integrated theology, for its spirit is quite in line with the motions of Christian philosophers of the first centuries for whom being a philosopher means to live an ascetic life, even to exchange one's normal human existence for a life that is angelic and even divine.¹⁸² Speculation enters in scarcely at all.¹⁸³ Philosophy was simply the equivalent of the monastic life.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, theology regarded as wisdom stands for something more than a noble science; it has to do not only with knowledge but also and equally with action;¹⁸⁵ it is "properly speaking the sphere of worship."¹⁸⁶

At this point we may also ponder awhile, under a light that will afford us fresh and liberating insights, one of the constant subjects of Christian spirituality: continuous

¹⁷⁵ See Mk 16:15; Jn 3:18–36; 5:24; etc.

¹⁷⁶ "Grundgesetz muss sein, dass uns die Theologie nicht nur Wissenschaft sei, sondern wesentliche Heilsbotschaft" (H. Rahner, *Eine Theologie der Verkündigung* [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1939], p. 11).

¹⁷⁷ Kerygmatic theology, charismatic theology, a theology of life, and even biblical theology are all terms that imply an expansion of the theology of orthodoxy into orthopraxy.

¹⁷⁸ See the observation of St. Augustine: "Furthermore, all those who know Scripture do not intend to criticize in the rites of the pagans the fact that they built temples, established priesthoods, and performed sacrifices, but the fact that they did so in honor of demons" (*Epistola* CII.18 [PL 33.377], quoted in S. Grill, "Die Religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung der vormosaïschen Bündnisse," *Kairos* 2 (1960): p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ Cf., for example, the patristic synthesis put forward by Maximus the Confessor: "Practice constitutes the reality of theory, while theory is the inner mysterious soul of practice" (*Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 63 [PG 90.681A], quoted by H. U. von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, p. 338, which presents this same synthesis in an illuminating way).

¹⁸⁰ See the study of J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu*, notably chap. 9, "La théologie monastique," pp. 179ff.

¹⁸¹ See patrological proofs in G. Penco, "La vita ascetica come 'filosofia' nell'antica tradizione monastica," *Studia monastica* 2 (1960): pp. 79–93.

¹⁸² See G. Bardy, "Philosophie' et 'Philosophie' dans le vocabulaire chrétien des premiers siècles," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 25 (1949): pp. 106ff.

¹⁸³ See some interesting documentation in I. Hausherr, *Direction spirituelle en Orient autrefois* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1955), pp. 56ff. The entire work affords an excellent presentation of this type of spirituality.

¹⁸⁴ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* VI (PG 35.721) (in I. Hausherr, op. cit., p. 57).

¹⁸⁵ As is well known, the Scholastics understand *Sophia* as a *sapida scientia*, i.e., as experimental and "savoring" knowledge, but for the Fathers it is an active knowledge or a wise action endowed with knowledge, in just the same way as true gnosis does not refer to a pure intellectual value.

¹⁸⁶ This expression is used by H. U. von Balthasar with reference to the interpretation of John of Scythopolis in *Kosmische Liturgie*, p. 331.

prayer.¹⁸⁷ If prayer emerges exclusively from the realm of the conscious, continuous prayer is an impossibility. Hesychasm would then be merely a technique of maintaining awareness or a means of keeping oneself in a state of alertness—which gives rise to a number of difficulties. In other words, if Christianity were simply orthodoxy it would not be capable of drawing upon the whole of Man, let alone the whole of the universe. Continuous prayer only becomes possible for the good reason that prayer, as Origen affirms,¹⁸⁸ is sacrifice and that sacrifice is an act, action: "My prayers rise like incense, my hands like the evening offering."¹⁸⁹ "He lifts up his hands who lifts up his deeds,"¹⁹⁰ and this activity—which gives to our actions new meaning, a nobler and more lofty significance and a deeper reality, enriching them by imparting to them a divine content willed by God—this is, precisely, worship. We are only in a position to pray without ceasing if our prayer and our being are wholly intermingled, if our life has veritably become worship. Orthopraxy affirms the precedence of being (of the living being) over knowledge, or in the final analysis, the relationship of the Word to the Father. True orthopraxy implies orthodoxy.¹⁹¹ If, on the other hand, we consider prayer simply as a concentration of the attention—in other words, as an activity related only to orthodoxy—we end up by espousing attitudes that verge upon the inhuman.¹⁹²

That is, nowadays, a new awareness of orthopraxis seems to us to be of the utmost importance in the field of sociology, particularly for our present situation. We are in point of fact living in an age when the encounter of religions and cultures is becoming both inevitable and necessary. We may by all means refrain from expressing any value judgments upon the worth of cultures other than the Christian one, but we cannot, nor should we, deny a priori that there may in truth be a theological pluralism, just in the same way as there is evidenced nowadays a pluralism in the heart of other branches of learning. But in this we are envisaging the possibility that different schools may refer back to one and the same supratheological truth. Seeing, however, that one single doctrine cannot claim to be orthodox, whether because it has not yet been sealed with the (ecclesial) seal of orthodoxy or because it has not yet been finally determined, there remains as a common foundation orthopraxy only, the existential affirmation of truths that are assuredly Christian, though not yet crystallized into dogmas.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ See 1 Th 5:16–18; Eph 6:18; 1 Tim 2:8; etc.

¹⁸⁸ *Homiliae in primum librum Regum* I.9 (apud H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, n. 820).

¹⁸⁹ Ps 140 (141):2.

¹⁹⁰ Origen, loc. cit.

¹⁹¹ "The face (πρόσωπον) of the logos is life, but the natural basis (φύσις) of life is the logos" (Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* [PG 91.9A–12A], apud H. U. von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, p. 339).

¹⁹² See the aspect of *yoga* that is called *anavaratanusandhana*, continuous concentration.

¹⁹³ The prudent attitude adopted by the church on the occasion of interconfessional colloquia finds here its own deep *raison d'être*. When belief is shared, it is possible to discuss, even debate, doctrines, but when this common denominator is missing, not much is to be expected from such meetings, at least as regards the question with which we are concerned: supernatural truth that is only revealed in faith. It would be a perversion to consider that my faith depends upon my ideas when in reality it is my ideas that depend, to a greater or less extent, upon my faith. The acceptance of Christian truth is a matter of conversion, not of dialectics. It is quite different, of course, if one formally abrogates this vital point, so that one is then discussing in purely intellectual terms and truly searching to know the ideas of others (and even their faith) in a more direct, truer, and deeper manner.

This possibility cannot in this day and age be denied. Let us take the example of a new Indian convert. He could call himself a loyal disciple of Christ and a firm adherent of the church, without, for all that, this orthodoxy taking a settled form for which he is obliged to account.¹⁹⁴ If an attempt is made to inculcate in him the Western ways of thought, even as regards Christian matters, of the average European Catholic, he may perhaps consent to adopt these ideas, simply because he is not in a position to produce others as orthodox, but it is highly likely that when he does so they remain peripheral to his spirit and not deeply assimilated.¹⁹⁵

This way of thought need not challenge at all the essential meaningfulness of orthodoxy. It is simply intended to highlight the preponderating role of orthopraxy and to show the inner relationship, nonhierarchical in character, that conditions both the one and the other.¹⁹⁶

Dhyāna-mārga

Is it possible to lead a Christian life without according to meditation a position of the greatest importance? Is the average Christian really aware of the fact that meditation is a human means of self-fulfillment? The Christian has, no doubt, no need of Hīndū worship in order to grasp the importance of contemplation, though he may well find some assistance in the practice of yoga and discover therein theoretical insights into the nature of prayer.¹⁹⁷ We have already on several occasions drawn attention to the fact that prayer is an essential part of worship, for this latter necessarily includes an exchange of words and is neither an action devoid of contemplation nor contemplation deprived of action.¹⁹⁸

Action and contemplation are closely connected. The resultant whole is, precisely, worship. The exaggerated opposition of the one to the other arises out of an unfortunate legacy of Greek thinking that has often weighed heavily on the West.¹⁹⁹ Christianity, certainly, has never definitively ratified such a cleavage,²⁰⁰ and up to the Hellenistic period it is possible to find points of contact.²⁰¹ It is necessary, however, that Christian faith should create its own

¹⁹⁴ By advising missionaries to conserve "pagan rites," the church has defended the cause of this ontic continuity of orthopraxy. See documents in A. V. Scumois, *La papauté et les missions au cours des six premiers siècles* (Paris-Louvain: Église Vivante, 1951), pp. 128ff.

¹⁹⁵ Why have Asia, Africa, and Latin America seldom produced first-class theological works? Usually this is explained in terms of the mediocrity of their cultural level and intellectual capacity, but the question needs to be asked whether the gulf that separates in them orthopraxy from orthodoxy, just because this latter ill suits their mentality, is not in fact for many the cause of this lack.

¹⁹⁶ "The Christian religion, indeed, is not simply a doctrine. It is an event, an action and not an action of the past, but an action of the present in which the past is recovered and the future advanced" (L. Bouyer, *Le mystère pascal* [Paris: Cerf, 1950]). See also R. Guardini, *Vorschule des Betens* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1952), pp. 258–60.

¹⁹⁷ See in the Upanishads (*Kāth U II.12*) the phrase *adhyātma-yoga*, which occurs only this one time. It is also probably the first time that the word *yoga* occurs in the Upanishads; see J. N. Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁹⁸ "Et erit opus iustitiae pax, / et cultus iustitiae silentium," sings the liturgy (Isa 32:17; *Breviarium Romanum, resp. ad Matutinum, lectio I, die 15.9*).

¹⁹⁹ See the masterly exposition of H. U. von Balthasar, "Aktion und Kontemplation," in *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1960), pp. 245–59.

²⁰⁰ Cf., for example, for Greek patrology: L. Bouyer, "La spiritualité byzantine," in J. Leclercq, F. Vandenbroucke, and L. Bouyer, *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. 2, *La spiritualité du Moyen Âge*, pp. 653, 660ff., etc.

²⁰¹ The much debated word *θεωπλά* need not necessarily be understood as spectacle in a passive

categories, for with those of Hellenism alone its message can today no longer, we believe, fulfill its universal task.²⁰²

It is, therefore, an urgent task to perform: namely, that of disengaging the Christian core of prayer from the contemplative forms that were to be found among the Greeks and in the early Middle Ages.²⁰³ That India has something positive to contribute to this subject is not yet readily admitted, but in the present state of affairs she could nevertheless act as a stimulant.

We do not intend here to embark on a debate of these ideas. We must be content with listing schematically several aspects only:²⁰⁴

- Prayer, a way of becoming and therefore of being.
- Prayer as sacrifice—thus open to becoming a reality in the form of continuous prayer.
- Prayer considered not as a private occupation but as the liturgy of the whole community.
- Prayer for obtaining what one in fact already has. In this case it is the means of removing an obstacle rather than of acquiring certain qualities in an artificial manner (there is no question, even, of virtues, for they are already taken for granted in any life of prayer). There is here no contradiction with our first point.
- Prayer as stillness and relaxation—in the framework of the preceding point. It should not, properly speaking, fix its attention on any object nor have in view any *indirect and immediate goals*.
- Prayer of consolation and—in accordance with the dictates of prudence and in order to avoid exaggerations—of resignation. This delicate subject requires further and separate development at length. This prayer used to be accorded the rank of a Christian virtue (until unbelievers of our day revolted against its caricatures). Although it is very necessary to fight against poverty and injustice, to refrain from seeking an easy refuge in prayer or mankind's use of it in order to escape from action and duty, there is nevertheless a place for that prayer that consists of a joyful acceptance of one's own human insufficiencies.
- Prayer—this also is a dangerous aspect and one that is not always free from abuse—as the total gift of the self (body, soul, and spirit) of the divine; thus, prayer as an attitude including in its embrace the body and its values.

In all of this there is no question of harking back to heteronomous ritualism and the tyranny of rubrics. The criticism voiced by the Upanishadic seers in India, no less than those of the Old Testament prophets, permits nobody to conceive of worship or sacrifice as something that has nothing to do with life or the spirit. The place of liturgy is not the sacristy nor a vast temple but the temple of the Holy Spirit, made not of living stones, that is, of men.²⁰⁵ It is just because worship does not simply mean a tribute of praise or the rendering of glory

sense. Even in Sophocles the word *theoros* means spectator, member of congregation, especially during the sacred rites, and hence the one who does rather than looks, who takes part in the game, because he is involved in it.

²⁰² Laberthonniere's criticism of Greek ways of thought is not without interest in this regard. Cf. M. M. d'Hendecourt, *Pascha nostrum. Du temps à l'éternité* (Paris: Vrin, 1950), pp. 27–28, etc.

²⁰³ See the "*orationis holocaustum*" of monastic tradition, in H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, vol. 1 (Paris: Aubier, 1959), p. 83.

²⁰⁴ For brevity's sake we are restricting ourselves to a certain number of points given as examples. A too-detailed consideration would overload our study.

²⁰⁵ See *Postcommunio, Commune Dedicacionis ecclesiae*: "... qui de vivis et electis lapidibus ..." See 1 Pet 2:5.

to God, as if it were one particular act alongside other human duties, that its milieu is the whole cosmos. It is only complete when it includes a cosmic dimension. Thus considered, it effects the unity of the person and the cosmos, and its importance as the means by which this whole cosmos, including mankind, attains its fully human and theandric goal is not disconnected with Man's personal tribute of praise to God.²⁰⁶ *Ite, Missa est!* announces the liturgy of the Roman rite as soon as the sacrifice of the *head* has been shared among all the *members*, and God's salvation, indeed God himself, has been given to the people of God, so that in the future they may continue with devotion to offer the sacrifice of worship until the end of time.²⁰⁷

Transmythization

We have already on two occasions spoken of demythologization and shall therefore not deal anymore with this question directly. Certain complementary considerations, however, will not be out of place at this juncture in order to help us understand better the significance of the Indian theology of worship for Christianity. All depends on the particular relationship that subsists between myth and worship and on the remoteness of this latter from *logos*.

Demythization

Any attempt at demythologization starts from the idea that the gospel is tied up with one particular epoch; the kerygma was uttered to men of olden days, who were deeply imbued with a mythical view of the world. In order to succeed in *interpreting* the message without either loss or distortion and in order to grasp its true content, it is necessary, it is affirmed, to demythize the kerygma itself, that is to say, to rid it of the mythical forms of that period.²⁰⁸ Now this proposition may be laudable in itself, but all depends on the manner in which one sets to work. Will the hearer grasp the message better? Will he find himself more disposed to accept it? For us, the problem is not to discover how to demythize, *how* to distill with clarity and precision the essence of the message; what interests us, at this moment, is the actual nature of demythization.²⁰⁹

The idea outlined above is based on a twofold consideration; as regards its text proper, the gospel is conditioned by its own epoch, but its message is addressed to Men of all ages. When we compare its mode of operation with that of demythization, we find that its proclamation involves a living relationship between a given message and its hearer. If the hearer is eliminated, the message loses all its meaning, for it is always made for Man. The

²⁰⁶ "Tota redempta civitas est unum sacrificium quo seipsam offert Deo Patri" (St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, quoted by L. Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, p. 78, which gives a good commentary on this point).

²⁰⁷ See Gal 6:10; Eph 5:16; etc.

²⁰⁸ "We have here, properly speaking, a problem of *hermeneutics*, in other words of interpreting the Bible and the message of the Church in such a way that they are understood as a word addressed to mankind" (R. Bultmann, in K. Jaspers and R. Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung* [Munich: R. Piper, 1954], p. 62).

²⁰⁹ "Unter *Entmythologisierung* verstehe ich ein *hermeneutisches Verfahren* das mythologische Aussagen bzw. Texte nach ihrem Wirklichkeitsgehalt befragt. Vorausgesetzt ist dabei, dass der Mythos zwar von einer Wirklichkeit redet, aber in einer nicht adäquaten Weise" (R. Bultmann, "Zum Problem der Entmythologisierung," in E. Castelli [ed.], *Il problema della demitizzazione*, Archivio di Filosofia 1-2 [Padova: CEDAM, 1961], p. 19). There is an assumption here that demythized speech stands for a more adequate mode of expression than myth!

communication of a message presupposes a certain preparation on the part of the addressee, a preparation that varies with different individuals: moral integrity, intellectual honesty, and so on. Demythization, on the other hand, prefers to adapt the kerygma to the man (by which we mean here modern and "scientific" man). This may have some success as a method, yet it is not surprising if this "technique" allows part of the message to be lost. We have termed it "technique," because demythologization is one of the characteristics of the technical civilization of our day. Now, the idea of the India of days gone by—but was it then in her power to do otherwise? We do not know—was to "cultivate" men rather than their milieu. This technique-conditioned century "cultivates" the milieu and leaves Man to his own devices. We have already observed this from the first; India endeavors to procure for Man freedom and the full perfection of his powers by seeing to it that his culture should make him independent of his surroundings, and even of his own body and personal needs, and that it should bestow upon him a mastery of all eventualities.²¹⁰ Is it worthwhile, or is it possible to change the world, Man's surroundings, society? Culture means first and foremost culture of the spirit! On account of its Greek heritage, on the other hand, technical civilization does precisely the reverse: it "refines" Man by acting in such a way that his culture awakens and develops in him the greatest possible number of needs (even in the realm of the physical) and offers him simultaneously the wherewithal to satisfy them. It thus reconstructs the world, Man's surroundings, his society, his body and soul; indeed only his secret depths remain untouched. India seeks *simplicity*, simplification; the modern world aspires toward development—and it is this later mood that gives rise to demythization.²¹¹ Demythization does not ask Man to show proof of his receptive and open spirit, but rather asks for a technical translation of the message so that this latter may be properly understood. Everyone is familiar with the proverb "If the mountain will not go to Muhammad, Muhammad must go to the mountain!" It is out of this situation that demythization emerges. Since the Sermon on the Mount or the "gospel" does not penetrate the heart of Man (one might almost say: does not descend to meet him), then we must stop trying to lead Man to the mountain and endeavor, rather, by all possible technical arts, to place it within his reach. This is not all, however. Those who claim, and not without reason, that men of olden times were conditioned by their own day and age, forget perhaps that modern man also, despite his learned training, is part of a transient age and that what appears obvious to him at this moment may perhaps be veiled from the eyes of future generations. It is also necessary, in the tempo-spatial order, for the message to have at its disposition a vehicle. It requires a certain clothing. A total stripping, such as demythization seems sometimes to envisage, would render the message entirely invisible, inaudible, and intransmissible; not so much, it is true, because this message is necessarily and indissolubly linked with outward trappings, myths, and forms, but because it cannot be completely discarnate. Our modern "myth" is, in point of fact, science. This is why we shall venture to speak of a certain transmythization. For further clarification, let us proceed to define the elements this word comprises.

²¹⁰ See the wonderful song of a village poet translated by R. Tagore: "O cruel man of urgent need, must you scorch with fire the mind which still is a bud? You want to make the bud bloom into a flower and scatter its perfume without waiting! Do you not see that my Lord, the supreme Teacher, takes ages to perfect the flower and never is in a fury of haste? But because of your terrible greed you only rely on force, and what hope is there for you, o man of urgent need? Prithee, says Madan the poet, Hurst not the mind of my Teacher. Lose thyself in the simple current, after hearing his voice, O man of urgent need!" (Presidential speech at the first session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, Calcutta, 1925 [presented in *The Indian Philosophical Congress: Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume* {Bangalore, 1950}, p. 307]).

²¹¹ See R. Bultmann, in K. Jaspers and R. Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung*, op. cit., p. 61.

Logos

To demythologize is to replace the myth with *logos*. One demythizes because one desires to render the message intelligible. The operation successfully accomplished, the demythized message would become an intelligible doctrine, rid of cosmogonic, mythical, and other superfluities. One would then decide for or against this doctrine, in accordance with the alternative presented. Demythization is not necessarily a pure naturalism. The place of faith is not excluded from it.

Our transmythization, on the other hand, sets out to recover the first, supralogical meaning of the word *logos*. *Logos* certainly denotes a certain intelligibility, but not only or even primarily an intelligibility that is rational and logical. The original meaning is less *ratio* than *verbum* and, at first, less *verbum mentis* than *verbum entis*, the revelation of the being of something, its symbol. Of chief importance concerning this word is not the meaning it conveys but rather the fact of its being spoken. The word wants to be expressed. Its content, its sound, consists of all that which one can write or convey in its regard, but one must not confuse the word with the writing or with the sound. The word means *al-locution* rather than *locution*. Its *An-halt* takes precedence over its *In-halt*. It links us to the one who speaks and puts us in communion with him rather than with that which is spoken. The word desires first of all to be perceived, received, and after that, only to be understood. To hear the word is, first of all, to listen to the one who is speaking. The word, when it is listened to, reveals the one who speaks. Even before comprehending the contents of the word, we are in communion with the person. Acceptance of the word depends hardly at all on the logical and "scientific" analysis of its purport, but on the response accorded to the one who speaks. Thus, in order to understand properly, it is necessary first of all to love. The primary meaning of λόγος is not νόημα but σύμβολον. The word is, simply, the symbol. It *has*, certainly, a content, a meaning, an intelligibility, but it *is* an epiphany, a communication, a revelation. To sum up: the essential of a message is not what it in *itself* contains or conveys, but the one whom it concerns, the one by whom it is inspired, the one of whom it speaks, the one who is its object.²¹²

This conception, moreover, is not peculiar to India.²¹³ For the Old Testament, the word of God signifies a divine commandment, an intervention of God. The word of God means the proclamation or sounding-forth of God and, at the same time, the declaration of his power. Creation and the commandments are both his word. The word of God, finally, is his will, his good pleasure.²¹⁴ It is the same thing in the New Testament. To do the will of God is to listen to his word and put it into practice.²¹⁵ Whoever listens to the words of Christ will be

²¹² Herein lies the phenomenological explanation of the existence of a sacred language of worship that it is not *absolutely* necessary to "understand," provided that one remains in living communication with the one who "speaks."

²¹³ There is as yet no consensus of opinion on the etymological meaning of the word *brahman*. There is certainly a connection with "discourse," "prayer (vocal)," "to blow," "to be enlarged," "to extend," and other similar concepts. Cf., for example, L. Renou and L. Silburn, "Sur la notion de brahman," *Journal asiatique* 237 (1949): pp. 7-46; T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Upaniṣad*, in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, vol. 1 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 60; P. Thieme, "Brahman," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 102 (1952): pp. 91ff.; J. Gonda, *Notes on Brahman* (Utrecht: Beyers, 1950); H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, Bollingen Series 26 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1951), pp. 74ff.; etc.

²¹⁴ See the exhaustive and well-documented study of R. Bultmann, "Der Begriff des Wortes Gottes im Neuen Testament," in *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 1, pp. 268-93, which will absolve us from attempting a fuller treatment of the subject and from furnishing numerous quotations.

²¹⁵ See Lk 8:21; 11:28; etc.

saved.²¹⁶ He himself is the Word.²¹⁷ After having spoken in former times through the prophets, God in this last day has spoken through his Son.²¹⁸ He is in the word of life.²¹⁹ His words are true,²²⁰ for he is himself Truth.²²¹ Furthermore the words of Jesus always draw attention to the bond that exists or ought to exist between word and deed.²²² His word is powerful in exactly the same manner as his power is word.²²³ In every so-called primitive culture, the word is the first epiphany of all things. The word of God is God himself, and mastery of the word is the requisite condition for sovereignty over any given object. It is only when the word becomes merely vocal sound that magic puts in its appearance. If the magician exercises his magic, it is because he has at his command the necessary words.

India possesses a philosophy of the word and even a complete philosophical system based thereon.²²⁴ We cannot linger upon it but will conclude these reflections with two remarks.

Orthodox Hinduism maintains—to the amazement of Westerners—that the Vedas have no author.²²⁵ First, let us note that in the Hindū mind the Vedas do not rank as “Holy Scripture,” but as *śruti*, that is to say, *that which has been heard*.²²⁶ They are no writings, but words, and as such authoritative, powerful, substantial, and subsistent. They are words such as possess in themselves a salvific power and can lead to the contemplation of Brahman.²²⁷ The key passages of the *śruti* (*maha-vakyani*) can bring about, sole and united, total liberation, according to the Advaita school.²²⁸ In this there is no necessity to see magic;²²⁹ it is to be explained by the fact that the word is not only conceived to be speech or a product of the intellect, but also symbol.

²¹⁶ See Mk 8:38; Jn 7:28; 5:38; 14:10; etc.

²¹⁷ See Jn 1:1.

²¹⁸ See Heb 1:1–2.

²¹⁹ See Jn 6:63–68; 8:51; etc.

²²⁰ See Jn 8:40.

²²¹ See Jn 14:6.

²²² “Es ist auch keineswegs so, dass Wort und Handeln Jesu als zwei getrennte Funktionen seiner Erscheinung auseinanderfallen . . . schon hier wird deutlich, wie das Wort wirksames, selbst handelndes ist, das heisst aber: Grundbestandteil eben des Handelns” (G. Kittel, art. “λέγω,” in G. Kittel [ed.], *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942], p. 107).

²²³ Cf., for example, Mt 8:16; Mk 1:25ff.; 2:10ff.; 4:39; Lk 5:5; 7:7; 14ff.; etc.

²²⁴ See R. Panikkar, “Sur l’herméneutique de la tradition dans l’Hindouisme. Pour un dialogue avec le Christianisme,” in E. Castelli (ed.), *Ermeneutica e tradizione*, Archivio di Filosofia 1–2 (Rome, 1963), pp. 343–70.

²²⁵ This doctrine is an essential element in *Purva-mimamsa*. In addition, see discussion and interpretations with references to BS I.1.3.

²²⁶ Yet the ancient *rṣi*, the probable authors of the Vedas, are called *mantradrāṣṭa* (seers of mantras). One apprehends the powerful reality of the word by sight as much as by hearing.

²²⁷ See, for example, the whole question of *Aum-kara*, that is to say, the symbol *Om* (which is akin to *Amen*). Cf., for example, CU II.23.3; *Kath U* I.2.15ff.; *Mund U* II.2.3ff.; *Prasn U* V.1ff.; *Mand U* XII.1ff.; etc. See BG VII.8; VIII.13; XXVII.23–24.

²²⁸ Cf., for example, Sureśvara, *Naṣṭkarmya Siddhi* II.1ff. (see the first European translation of A. J. Alston, *The Naṣṭkarmya Siddhi of Śrī Sureśvara* [London: Shanti Sadan, 1959]). For the whole question cf. P. Hacker, *Untersuchungen über Texte des frühen Advaitavada*, vol. 1, *Die Schüler Śaṅkaras*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse 1950 (26) (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1951), pp. 97ff.

²²⁹ This is the opinion of P. Hacker, “Magic, Gott, Person und Gnade im Hinduismus,” *Kairos* 4 (1960): pp. 225ff. See also my letter to the editor in *Kairos* 2 (1961): pp. 112ff.

Second, we observe that the word is the symbol *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, par excellence, or, to use a Christian expression, it is sacramental. This fact confirms the truth of what we were saying earlier on the subject of symbolism: the symbol does not constitute "another" reality. The same applies to the word of God. It is very truth: God himself, God revealed to us, God as he is for us. It is not so much that we are enabled simply by the import conveyed by the word and independently from the word itself, to penetrate reality in depth, but rather that our listening to the word qua word conveys to us its complete message. We must certainly take into consideration also the question of understanding the word, but if we isolate this element, if we dissociate the comprehension of the word from the word itself, we lose in a fateful manner living ontic contact with the word in its entirety and we slip into intellectualism, even into rationalism.²³⁰ This second point has a direct relationship with the Christian dogma of the Trinity, which is of fundamental importance in the question we are studying.

The majority of religions run into difficulties over the fact that, as soon as they reach this point (and as a general rule they do), they are unable to admit that there can be a division in God (Christian theology would say: a relation) without compromising the simplicity and aseity of God. The word of God is God, the symbol of the divinity is the divinity, the image of God is God and is not only divine. Nevertheless, we are compelled to admit a distinction. If the *logos* of God were purely and simply God, one would fall into either polytheism or monism; if there were no possibility of the distinction that we find only in the dogma of the Trinity, then there would remain only two ways out: either we abstract the word from the word and take into our consideration only its theoretical content -and the door is open to humanism and atheism²³¹—or we regard the word of God, the symbol as the reality—and we are on our way to monism and pantheism.²³² It is only the theandric mystery (of Christ), which has its proper place only in a Trinitarian faith, that can provide a middle path that avoids the exclusiveness of the two extremes.

Mythos

In order to define the role of myth in worship and in religion in general, it is of importance first to get a clear idea of what is understood by myth. It is an idea that has known the most varying fortunes in the Christian fold, ranging from systematic refusal ("myth is a pagan notion"²³³) to the well-considered acceptance of it as the language of religion and hence as an inextricable element of the kerygma.²³⁴ Myth can be repudiated or accepted according to the idea one has in its regard, and that depends in turn on our own outlook on religion. In the course of history, everything has in its day been called myth, from the strictest truth to the lowest form of falsehood.²³⁵

We shall expatiate no further on the problem of myth, contenting ourselves with noting the following.

²³⁰ The reader is urged to read at least Ps 28 (29) on the word of God!

²³¹ China at this point joins forces with a large part of Europe and Africa, though on the whole it is ranged with India.

²³² "Οὐ γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει," 1 Cor 4:20.

²³³ G. Stählin, art. "μῦθος," in G. Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4, p. 800.

²³⁴ See R. Maré, *Bultmann et l'interprétation du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), pp. 65ff.; K. Jaspers, in K. Jaspers and R. Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung*, pp. 20ff., 77, etc.

²³⁵ See the abundant documentation provided in G. Stählin, art. cit., pp. 771ff.

1. For the man who believes in myths and who lives in the context of myth, myth is the sole vehicle of revelation, in other words, of the religious message.²³⁶ If he considers that religious truth must be historical, his myth will take place in time, whereas if the historical dimension is considered accidental, the myth will be a-historical. For the man who no longer believes, the mythical form of expression is meaningless and demythization is necessary. Furthermore, in the case of the former, demythization, if it has any meaning at all, means an erosion of religion. We must, however, note well here the following point: it is not true, even from the phenomenological point of view, that the man who is found at stage one understands myth as if he were looking at it from the viewpoint of stage two. To put it more simply: he who accepts the myth views it not in a naturalistic but in a mythical manner. If the myth sees blood in the moon, stars underfoot, hell below, heaven above, the one who is at home in the world of myth will never interpret these images in a naturalistic manner; he will not even attempt to find a learned cosmological explanation in the way that "civilized" persons do. To take these myths in a material and materialistic way would constitute a sheer *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. The sun, the real sun, is not at all in the eyes of myth the celestial body, of which the natural sciences tell us, nor is its color the length of waves.²³⁷ "Below," according to the understanding of myth, does not in any way conjure up the notion of negative size, such as is to be found in a system of coordinates, nor a spatial notion such as is found in Newton's concept. This is why we were maintaining just now that mythology interpreted in a rational

²³⁶ See A. Pauly, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, art. "Mythos," coll. 1374–411. Cf., for example, col. 1377.

²³⁷ Let us take the first example that comes to mind: "In sole posuit tabernaculum suum" (Ps 18 [19]:6). Does this mean that the Messiah has planted his tent or his encampment on the sun? If a demythization of this verse is required, a whole book would not suffice. One could unearth in this symbolism endless different ideas and fresh nuances of meaning. We could stress the supremacy of Christ, the meaning of the tent and its connection with the Incarnation, the divinity of the Messiah, his cosmic power. We could make favorable reference to the new translation: "Ibi posuit sole tabernaculum suum" and interpret it all over again. Nevertheless, any mentality sensitive to symbolism, though it may accept these interpretations en bloc, will not find in them any equivalent to the original. Cf., for example, the word play of Clement of Alexandria on "sol iustitiae," light and life in *Protrepticus* XI.114 (cf. O. Stählin [ed.], *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 1, *Protrepticus und Paedagogus* [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 12] [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905], p. 80). See furthermore the NT verse, "Iusti fulgebunt sicut sol in regno Patris" (Mt 13:43; cf. 17:2; cf. Ws 3:7; Prov 4:18; etc.). See also the marvellous *sutra* of *RV* III.66.15 (cf. Mt 5:45) and also *RV* I.50.10: "We seek beyond darkness, the light supreme and we find Surya (the sun). God among the gods (*devam devatā*), the light beyond compare (*jyotiḥ uttamā*).²³⁸ Also: "It will never be night again and they will not need lamplight or sunlight because the Lord God will be shining on Them" (Rev 22:5 [cf. 21:10, 23–25]), and "Then, having attained the zenith, he will never again rise or set. He will shine alone in the midst of all . . . the sun has never known a setting or a rising. . . In very truth, for him who knows the mystery of *brahman* (*brahmopaniṣadam veda*), the sun neither sets nor rises; for such a one it is always daylight" (*CU* III.11.1–3 [cf. also "Non erit tibi amplius sol ad lucendum per diem, nec splendor lunae illuminabit te: et erit tibi Dominus in lucem sempiternam" (Isa 60:19)]). "Do you still doubt that in you is the sun and the moon, since you have been told that you are the 'light of the world'?" (Origen, *Homiliae in Leviticum* V.2 (*apud* H. U. von Balthasar, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer*, n. 16). "Excitabo auroram!" says the new version of Ps 56 (57):8; 107 (108):3. "You have found the sun!" says *RV* VI.72.1, addressing Indra and Soma. See also, as a curiosity, the explanation of the above-mentioned psalm in F. von Baader, *Revision der Philosophie der Hegelschen Schule bezüglich auf das Christenthum* (Stuttgart: Liesching, 1839), p. 128, and also the use made of it by J. Kepler in his *Harmonices Mundi* (see the English edition, *The Harmonies of the World*, in *Great Books of the Western World* 16 [Chicago-London-Toronto: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952], p. 1081).

learned manner constitutes an absurdity, not only for scientific man but also (and, most of all) for myth-world dwellers.²³⁸

Not for nothing at the beginning of Christianity was gnosis the principal enemy of myth.²³⁹

2. Is there nothing, then, that can serve as a bridge between these two contrasting positions? A bridge with two-way traffic is perhaps not conceivable without having recourse to a compromise and ultimately to relativism, which would certainly be incompatible with true faith. A better plan would be to seek something that transcends both these attitudes. Our earlier statement on heteronomy (myth) and autonomy (*logos*), and their possible synthesis within an *ontonomous* line, might here perhaps find its desired application. The process that starts with myth and proceeds to *logos* corresponds exactly with the development in Man of which we have already spoken, which starts from a heteronomous, global, and undifferentiated attitude and reaches finally one that is autonomous, well-defined, and rational, but exclusive.²⁴⁰

The autonomous substitution of *logos* for myth is easy to understand: if truth is to be sought in a value judgment, then myth is not true; it is even falsehood, and such a thing as a *μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας*²⁴¹ does not exist. Only if we recognize that reality cannot be enclosed in our man-made concepts can we find a place for myth in our approach to truth.²⁴² Then truth is not sought in value judgments but in Man's inner harmony with a reality that bursts asunder our rational categories. In order, however, to avoid the pitfall of irrationalism, it is necessary to understand myth as a means of participation in reality, a means that transcends the domain of mere knowledge. In other words, we must consider myth in terms of worship, of sacred action, or as a parable that invites us to act in response. This parable seeks not only to be understood ("he who has ears to hear, let him hear"²⁴³) but also to be implemented, actualized ("go and *do* thou likewise").²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Let us not forget that the so-called scientific worldview, however clear-cut and objective it may be, and more exact, certainly, than the mythical view, is nevertheless poorer in terms of reality and no less subjective than this latter, in this sense that it corresponds to a determined degree of awareness. Cf., for example, O. Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, and also G. GUSDORF, *Mythe et métaphysique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953); etc.

²³⁹ See relevant documentation in G. Stählin, art. cit., pp. 785–86.

²⁴⁰ It is highly significant that the contemporary movement heads away from *logos* and back again to myth. Cf., for example "μῦθος und λόγος treten keineswegs, wie die landläufige Philosophiehistorie meint, durch die Philosophie als solche in einen Gegensatz . . . μῦθος und λόγος treten erst dort aus- und gegeneinander, wo weder μῦθος noch λόγος ihr anfängliches Wesen behalten können. Dies ist bei Platon geschehen" (M. Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 7), and "Der Mythos ist Bedeutungsträger, aber von Bedeutungen, die nur in dieser seiner Gestalt ihre Sprache haben. Nicht Vernichtung, sondern Wiederherstellung der mythischen Sprache ist der Sinn. Denn sie ist Sprache jener Wirklichkeit, die selber nicht empirische Realität ist" (K. Jaspers, in K. Jaspers and R. Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung*, pp. 19–20).

²⁴¹ Euripides, *Phoen.* 469 (*apud* G. Stählin, art. cit., p. 792).

²⁴² It is useful to realize that as regards the language of the Greek epic, the verb *μυθίζωμαι* has truth as its correlative while that of *λέγειν* is falsehood. See the documentation provided in K. Kerényi, "Mythos in verbaler Form," in H. Höfling (ed.), *Beiträge zu Philosophie und Wissenschaft. Wilhelm Szilasi zum 70. Geburtstag* (Munich: Francke, 1960), pp. 121–28. Nor should we forget that Homer was always reckoned *μυθολόγος κατ' ἔξοχην* (Plato, *Republic* III.398b). Later on, the poems of Homer were to be called simply *μῦθοι*. Cf., for example, Epicurus III.24.18 (*apud* G. Stählin, art. cit., p. 775). We observe furthermore that each time Origen employs the word *μῦθος* (in the sense of "story"), one finds in St. Jerome the word *fabula* (G. Stählin, art. cit., p. 776).

²⁴³ Mt 13:9.

²⁴⁴ Lk 10:37.

We have not arrived closer to the ontonomous synthesis of which we have spoken and hence to our special theme. We shall revert to it in the following paragraph, when we have made a third observation.

3. Πάντα Ζεὺς μυθεῖται, wrote the ancients.²⁴⁵ God reduces everything to myth, or if we may be permitted a freer translation, God mythologizes everything.²⁴⁶ This aphorism does not contradict in any way the word of the Bible, which teaches us that God orders all things wisely, by "measure, number, weight,"²⁴⁷ seeing that the first meaning of myth is precisely thought,²⁴⁸ and that the word is frequently encountered together with the word *logos*.²⁴⁹

Furthermore, although certain current interpretations that purport to be demythologized affirm to the contrary, myth (μῦθος) has scarcely anything to do with esoterism.²⁵⁰ It is far more closely linked with speech or word.²⁵¹ As we have seen, μῦθος does not mean either *flatus vocis* or simply a word in the mind; it is the indefectible link between flesh and spirit, matter and soul, and theory. Myth and *logos* go together, for they represent two aspects of the word: the first being the word that expresses thoughts²⁵² (corresponding to realities), the second being the intelligent act and also the task performed by the "thing" to which the word gives expression.²⁵³ *Logos* refers to the word with regard to the thinking of a speaking subject: that which is thought and calculated.²⁵⁴ Μῦθος, on the other hand, denotes primarily not, in fact, "the word with regard to the thought it conveys, but with regard to the reality it enshrines."²⁵⁵ If it is by *logos* that all things have been made²⁵⁶ and by *μῦθος* all things have come to birth—if, in brief, Zeus mythologizes all things and if Tao was present from the very first,²⁵⁷ and so on—all this can very well be more or less true (in accordance with different instances) and of unequal value, but it follows nonetheless that this first original action can

²⁴⁵ H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*; Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 30.

²⁴⁶ We realize that for that age the expression should be translated as "Zeus attends to all things."

²⁴⁷ See Ws 11:21.

²⁴⁸ See G. Stählin, art. cit., pp. 772ff. See the beautiful Homeric expression: μῦθον μυθεῖσθαι (*Od.* III.140): "to explain, expound the reason (of something)," from which springs naturally the idea "express thought."

²⁴⁹ The expressions λόγος καὶ μῦθος and also λόγος τοῦ μύθου occur frequently. See G. Stählin, art. cit., p. 777, etc.

²⁵⁰ The etymological derivation from μύω (to shut, cf. μυστήριον) is inadmissible. Cf., for example, the dictionaries of E. Boisacq and J. B. Hofmann.

²⁵¹ See Stählin, loc. cit. See also the aphorism of the OT: "ἄνθρωπος ἀχαρὶς, μῦθος ἀκαιρός" [a coarse-grained man is like an indiscreet story] (*Eccles* 20:19).

²⁵² See K. Kerényi, *Umgang mit Göttlichem*, pp. 36ff.

²⁵³ It is generally recognized today that the interpretation of Goethe of Jn 1:1—"In the beginning was action (*die Tat*)" (*Faust* Lv.1237)—is not so wide of the mark. "Der Ausdruck 'Wort'—*logos*—erweist die göttliche Macht und das göttliche Tun als geisterfüllte Macht und geisterfülltes Tun" (M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, vol. 1, *Gott der Dreieinige* [Munich: Hueber, 1953], § 44, p. 310).

²⁵⁴ W. F. Otto, "Der Mythos," *Studium Generale* 4 (1955), apud E. Grassi, *Kunst und Mythos* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1957), p. 81.

²⁵⁵ W. F. Otto, *Theophrasia*, p. 23.

²⁵⁶ See Jn 1:3; Col 1:16ff.; Heb 1:2; etc.

²⁵⁷ See *Tao-te-ching* L.2; IV.1-2; XXI.2; XXV.1; etc.

only be expressed in myth and that it applies to the whole world,²⁵⁸ learned and ignorant, the "advanced" and the less "advanced." The word of Aristotle, so often wrongly interpreted, is not so far removed from the truth.²⁵⁹

Parable

At the end of his Gospel, St. John tells us that the whole world would not suffice to contain the books that would be needed for a detailed recitation of the acts of Christ.²⁶⁰ Demythization has taken it upon itself to write these books. It wants to explain everything and render everything intelligible by adapting itself to the mentality of different readers. In this sense everything that is written on the subject of the person of Christ constitutes a demythization, because it seeks to plumb the depths of and to interpret the work of Christ—and it is quite true that soon the world will be unable to carry and endure the weight of such a literature. This type of writing is legitimate; it can even be useful and edifying. The important thing is to make a distinction between Christian literature and the sacred message, a distinction that is essential as well as relative. Biblical inspiration means only that the holy books are free from error but that in addition they convey the word of God.²⁶¹ "These are recorded [γέγραπται] so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name."²⁶² Other writings do not in theory lay claim to such a task. They help us to understand, they prepare and interpret, but they do not impart the living water of eternal life.²⁶³

This is not to say that a reversion to myth is all that is required nor that it is not possible to transmythize (if needs be), which would still involve demythization. The vital necessity is not to lose sight of the meaning of the gospel with reference to its wholeness and unity.

Let us note in the first place that "Scripture," as being a treasury of faith, is not simply a collection of writings; it is a living tradition. In no sense are Scripture and tradition two independent sources of Christianity. They are two interconnected, correlative dimensions of one and the same *reality* becoming a living message.

Let us also note, on the other hand, that the Gospels consist not only of myths but also of historical facts and "parables." These last-named are not simple myths or picture-style modes of expression that Jesus used after the manner of Orientals in order to be better understood by his listeners.²⁶⁴ Would anyone presume to assert that high-flown metaphysical discourses would have been more enduring and more perfect than a parable of Christ?²⁶⁵ It is permissible,

²⁵⁸ K. Kerényi is right to draw attention to the relation that exists between religion and tradition: "Die eigentliche Überlieferung jedoch ist das Wort. Es ist allerdings in zwei Sprachen auszusprechen, damit es den vornehmlichen Ausdruck *aller* Religionen bezeichnet: als 'Mythos'—'Wort'—und als 'Wort'" (*Umgang mit Göttlichem*, p. 24).

²⁵⁹ "ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἐστιν· ὁ γὰρ μῦθος σύγκειται ἐκ θαυμασίων," *Metaphys.* I.2.982b18. Jn 21:25.

²⁶¹ By "Bible" we understand, of course, Holy Scripture conserved by the church, preached by her and introduced in worship.

²⁶² Jn 20:31.

²⁶³ See Jn 4:10–14; etc.

²⁶⁴ This is what Seneca is surely thinking (*Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* LIX.6) when he tells us that the parable is "imbecillitatis nostrae adminicula."

²⁶⁵ See certain attitudes that we would do well to revise: "They [Gen 1:1–11] describe in a way readily understood by the people, the origin of the human race; they proclaim in a simple picturesque

no doubt, and even necessary to draw out from the gospel theological inferences, on condition, however, that it is never lost sight of that these latter are transpositions, explanations, or definitions of a gospel content whose intrinsic worth is both irreplaceable and inexhaustible. We must bear in mind, moreover, that the gospel, the word of God, has not been kept for us in its original form in order that we may be spared the servitude of grammar and philosophy. It is neither words nor concepts that the gospel has given to us, but the word of God in the form of events and parables. Only these latter are capable of transmitting the message; so they constitute the immediate *object* of the proclamation. The *subject* is, of course, invariably Christ himself and his Spirit.²⁶⁶

Events and parables, we have said, for the event alone would be simple history, while the parable without the event would cease to be more than myth. When in the West not long ago it was necessary to defend orthodox belief against the heresy of modernism, stress was laid on the historical value of the Christian event. It was upon this that the greatest store was set, for the historicity of the Christian message cannot be allowed to suffer any threat or erosion. There is here, indeed, a very particular historicity, but it is one that above all must not be understood in a rigid and exclusive manner. If our primary and principal object is purely and simply to proclaim the historic Christ, we minimize the living and suprahistoric *Pantokrator*. If, on the contrary, we close our eyes to the historicity in order to conserve only the parabolic value of the gospel, we give a foothold to gnosticism, which is the beginning of the ruination of all true religion.

Third, let us note that this union between the parable and event, between *logos* and myth (for we are referring here to a true *logomorphical* synthesis, avoiding, it is to be observed, the word "mythological"), is the result of effective participation in that "reality" of which we have spoken, of response accorded in a concrete fashion to that person, of true representation of that event, and of sincere openness toward these parables. Now, this is, precisely, worship.²⁶⁷

Myth and worship form a single whole.²⁶⁸ Myth expresses exactly what happens in worship.²⁶⁹ "Both are in the final analysis one and the same thing";²⁷⁰ but *logos* and worship are equally bound up together.²⁷¹ Moreover, faith and worship also go hand in hand.

To clarify this last-named relationship we must add a fourth observation concerning the parable. According to etymology a parable is simply a "juxtaposition."²⁷² A parable must be interpreted. This interpretation consists in discovering and crossing the bridge that links together the two juxtaposed "things." The "parabola" can only be brought into being by means of a "symbolon."²⁷³ The sym-bolon is the joint or connecting link that actualizes the parable.

style such as is well-suited to the mentality of an uncultured people, the fundamental presuppositions of the economy of salvation" ("Introduction au Pentateuque," in *La Sainte Bible*, École biblique de Jérusalem [Paris: Cerf, 1956], p. 5).

²⁶⁶ See Mt 10:19–20; Jn 14:16–26; etc.

²⁶⁷ "A rite is a myth-in-action," says G. van der Leeuw, *L'homme primitif et la religion*, p. 120.

²⁶⁸ "Nun treffen wir im griechischen Kultus ein Element, das sich inhaltlich vom Mythos nicht trennen lässt" (A. Pauly, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, art. "Mythos," col. 1397).

²⁶⁹ This is gradually being realized afresh, even as regards the OT. See, for example, E. L. Ehrlich, *Die Kultsymbolik im Alten Testament und im nachbiblischen Judentum* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1959).

²⁷⁰ W. F. Otto, *Theophania*, p. 25.

²⁷¹ It is impossible for us to write more here on the nature of sacrament, but we feel that this connection is vitally important and that it opens up deep and wide perspectives.

²⁷² παραβολή is derived from παρα-βάλλειν, "to place one thing alongside another." It may be translated by "comparison" or "allegory."

²⁷³ As is well known, symbol comes from συμβάλλειν, συμβάλλεσθαι.

Let us put it another way: How do we interpret the parable? How do we arrive on the other shore? "To grasp" the parable implies that one has passed to the other side.²⁷⁴ The parable is not simply a game, a riddle to solve; it involves action—that is to say, worship—which will cause us to reach the proposed goal. One cannot "comprehend" the parable except insofar as one is ready and willing to be conducted to the other side, that is to say, to enter into the profound dynamism of the said parable.²⁷⁵ The condition of this openness is faith and faith alone.²⁷⁶

Fifth, the parable is, again, speech: this time in the sense of language or means of communication. It is clearly a "language," but a language that transcends cultural backgrounds and is independent of the concepts proper to one particular culture. It is a more universal, more general language. Concepts pass away, their meaning changes, while parables abide. This language possesses greater depth than any contemporary language of mankind; it is richer, more meaningful, seeing that the relationship between the image presented and the object with which it is compared remains unfailingly alive. The parable may of course remain enigmatic and meaningless to the one who is unable to cooperate in its dynamism. It welcomes the aid of ordinary speech and uses it for the most part, but sets its face against a slavery to words.

To sum up, then: We cannot help but speak in parables. All discourse consists in comparisons; each word, indeed, is a parable that confronts the concept with the "thing" conceived and thus unites them. Each word manifests *something* and sets the "thing" that is the object of our thought on a *parallel* line to our own personal way of conceiving it. The parable, properly speaking, does more than suggest something or other; it leads us to the archetype, to the original "type-figure."²⁷⁷

Abandoning etymology, we would like to conclude with one last remark: the two things coupled together by the parable are *logos* and myth. Sometimes it is myth that it sets alongside *logos*, and sometimes it is the other way round.

The man whose worldview is mythical is enabled by parable to discover the portion of *logos* inherent in truth. Parable serves such a one as a bridge so that myth does not "evaporate" or get reduced simply to legend; it is the analogy that conducts from myth to *logos*. In this case the parable is a means of demythization. Far from destroying the myth, it enlarges it and deepens its meaning. In a certain sense, indeed, it is its foundation.

It is the other way round for the one whose surrounding culture is a culture of *logos*; here the parable reunites the *logos* to the myth. It supplies whatever is lacking in the *logos*-content and leads him to the other shore, where concepts are no longer invoked and where the one thing apparent is that the character of the *logos* is purely intermediary and dependent upon culture—though not, for all that, to be despised. It leads to a realm where reality is not grasped or apprehended but rather experienced and lived, not in an egocentric fashion but the reverse, in the sense that it is through me that reality appears; it transports us into reality and makes us, paradoxically, the conscious participants therein (a consciousness, thus, which is universal, not individual). Yet parable does not allow everything to dissolve into vagueness. Its role, rather, is to bring the two sides together again, to join the one to the other. In this way it can be of service in remythizing. The *logos* is not rejected, but integrated and assigned to its proper place.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ See Jn 8:47; 10:27; 19:37; etc.

²⁷⁵ See Mt 13:10–17; 13:34–35; Mk 4:33–34; etc.

²⁷⁶ See Mk 4:10–12; Jn 12:40; Isa 6:9ff.; etc.

²⁷⁷ As an illustration of this, cf. Heb 9:9.

²⁷⁸ See Mk 4:33. This verse contains a profound meaning: "Using many parables like these, he spoke the Word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it" [παράβολαῖς πολλαῖς ἐλάλει

We need at this point to make it quite clear that the parable, contrary to the metaphor, is far from being something that is provisional and incomplete, valid only for this life on earth. It is not to be considered as that which aims somehow or other to introduce us during this life to the "thing-as-it-is" and is doomed afterwards to lose all meaning. It is, precisely, parable that combines *logos* and myth, both here and hereafter, never losing sight of either. It conserves the link between the two poles of Man's essential constitution. Parable remains the best means of defense against the temptation of gnosis, even when this latter is wrapped around with metaphysical arguments. Parable is not for angels, but for men, and it contains an implicit hope in the resurrection of the body and in the creation of new heavens and a new earth. It is a bridge, as we have said, beneath whose arch Man may sojourn and live, while yet he is below. In the final analysis every true word is also a parable, a symbol. There is no such thing as a purely spiritual domain apart from the material, and consequently the spiritual meaning, properly so called, is never so rich as the full and complete meaning of the parable where the material and the spiritual are joined together.²⁷⁹ The parable holds the two in an equilibrium that cannot be upset. It is the perfect symbol in that sense of which we have spoken. Over and above the role it fulfills as a means of knowledge and as a signpost toward truth, it constitutes the epiphany of the whole of reality. Not for nothing did Jesus speak in parables.²⁸⁰ On his lips are never to be found discarnate utterances continuing purely spiritual substance.²⁸¹ His message is more especially addressed to the simple and poor.²⁸²

Remythization

There is nothing new in the problem that confronts us, nor in its solution. History shows us that the church fathers regarded the word of God as a mystery, the sole key to which is its spiritual meaning. The Scholastics for their part reckoned that "littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria."²⁸³ The doctrine of the fourfold meaning of scripture is one that has been constantly upheld,²⁸⁴ but one of the fateful consequences of the Reformation was to weaken in a very important part of Christendom the sense of mystery.²⁸⁵ Therefore the contemporary

αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον]. The parable conveys *logos*, but it also conveys myth.

²⁷⁹ Cf., for example, the important evidence of YVXXXII.8, where God is depicted as that in which all things have their nest (*ekaniḍam*), or AVII.1.1, where one finds the same concept demythized, nest being replaced by form (*ekarupam*). It is of little importance, moreover, if the chronological order of these formulations is different.

²⁸⁰ "In all this Jesus spoke to the crowd in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy: I will speak to you in parables and expound things hidden since the foundation of the world [Ps 77 (78):2]" (Mt 13:34-35; see Ps 48 [49]:5).

²⁸¹ "Das Wort Jesu und die Vollmacht dieses Wortes bewegt sich nicht in einer 'nur' geistigen, jenseits des Körperlichen, Naturhaften liegenden Ebene, erhebt vielmehr seinen Herrschaftsanspruch an der vollen unverkürzten Geist-Leiblichkeit" (G. Kittel, art. "λόγος," in G. Kittel [ed.], *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4, p. 107).

²⁸² See Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21; Mk 10:15; etc.

²⁸³ For the history of this formulation and the evaluation it has received, cf. H. de Lubac, "Sur un vieux distique. La doctrine du 'quadruple sens,'" in *Mélanges offerts au R. P. Ferdinand Cavallera* (Toulouse: Bibliothèque de l'Institut Catholique, 1948), pp. 347-66.

²⁸⁴ See H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, vols. 1-4 (Paris: Aubier, 1959-1964).

²⁸⁵ See documentation given in H. de Lubac, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 127, etc.; M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), pp. 159ff., etc.

renewal of emphasis upon the Bible and upon reality is a welcome characteristic of modern theology and of present-day Christian awareness.

We would like now to complete the reflections that we have put forward in the preceding paragraphs and then we shall seek to discover what in regard to the question the contribution of India may be.

When there is any type of preaching or proclamation it is absolutely necessary that the hearer should be obliged to decide whether or not to put it into practice.²⁸⁶ It is with good reason that demythization insists on the fact that revelation is not at all the same thing as propagation of a body of doctrine.²⁸⁷ On this point, two remarks are necessary. First, the decision is not necessarily the outcome of reasoning, fully conscious, conclusive. It is, rather, something free and spontaneous, the "happening," one might say, of a decision. It is certainly far more a question of the word of God grasping *us* than of the word being grasped by any intellect of ours. It is impossible for us by means of *logos* alone to assimilate the Christian message in all its fullness. That a demythized preaching may be comprehended, we are prepared to admit, but there is no question of its being apprehended and received as the perfect and complete vehicle of salvation. The second remark concerns the cleavage that takes place between word and sacrament, such as manifests itself in a process of demythization. The *logos* cannot, left to itself, be the vehicle of the whole Christian message; it has need of the sacrament. Even if a demythized preaching is capable of putting forward an intelligible body of doctrine, yet it is only "practice," the sacrament, action, that can convey the other dimension of the Christian message.²⁸⁸ Now, in this latter, myth is indispensable, for without it there is no liturgy. A sacrament is simply a "whole" word, prior to any distinction of action and language, a word that possesses substantiality and efficacy, a concrete "event."

"The truth of things consists of what is both unfluctuating and eternal within them . . . now the eternal is the absolute, the non-caused."²⁸⁹ Consequently, there is by definition for Man one sole means of expressing this quintessence of truth, namely, the word. But the word, as we have seen, may be now speech, now *logos*. (European philosophic thought has made the mistake, we may note, during these latter centuries, of reducing the word to *logos* alone.) Myth and ontology (or metaphysics, if we prefer) constitute therefore the two attempts of Man to furnish these eternal verities with a means of expression. Both claim in a certain way to be above time and to possess universal validity; both refer to something above and beyond themselves and presuppose the existence of an organ suitable for the acceptance of their "words." Now, this last-named requirement is an indication, on the one hand, that neither of these two attempts is able to claim an absolute right of universal validity, and on the other hand, that a mythological or, in other words, metaphysical interpretation of myth is quite as erroneous as a mythical interpretation of ontology. In addition and finally, one may well wonder whether there is not some way of referring the two attempts to a higher common instance. It would be in some such way that mythology in the sense we have indicated would acquire meaningfulness.

²⁸⁶ "Die Offenbarung kann also nur jeweils Ereignis sein, wann und wo das Wort der richtenden und schenkenden Gnade jeweils einem Menschen zugesprochen wird" (R. Bultmann, in K. Jaspers and R. Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung*, p. 71).

²⁸⁷ "When the Revelation is truly understood as a revelation of God, then it is not a communication of doctrines nor a truth relating to ethics or to the philosophy of history, but rather the direct word of God to me" (id., loc. cit.).

²⁸⁸ See the whole eucharistic discourse of Jesus as recorded in Jn 6:26ff. It is there boldly stated that salvation is connected with a meal, an action, a sacrament, rather than with a doctrine.

²⁸⁹ E. Dacqué, *Die Urgestalt* (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1951), p. 5.

The organ of ontology is easy to indicate in the framework of our culture; it is *logos*, *ratio*, reason. Speaking purely phenomenologically, we could likewise affirm that in a parallel fashion the organ of myth is to be found in faith. However, as this concept is also appropriated by philosophy and more specifically by metaphysics, we cannot out of hand claim that faith is the organ of myth, although it would appear difficult to find a concept that is better adapted to express the means by which myth may be known and understood. The acceptance of any given philosophy is usually based on a step of Man's reasoning faculty. The acceptance of myth depends on a judgment that has no basis except that which consists in an act of "belief" in it or of affirmation that it merits such faith.

Faith is the support of the whole. The whole is presented only as a whole. Being, consciousness, life, theory—these are simply limitations that are not false in themselves but are never equivalent to the whole. Thus, faith possesses no means outside itself. Faith is acquired by the act of faith that is performed, an act that "maintains" (*logos*, *doxa*), but which also thrusts its roots deep within all things. Myth is the first epiphany of the whole before this latter is parceled out into different entities. In this resides its whole strength, and also its weakness. It encloses everything but contains nothing. The content of a myth is no longer myth; it is only legend (fable, metaphor) or else *logos* (concept, reason). (The error of demythization is to confuse the myth with its content and, recognizing the shaky foothold on truth or the latter, to endeavor to save the truth by demythization.)

The Christian faith in its developed form cannot, of course, without more ado be identified with this faith in myth of which we have been speaking. We must recognize, nevertheless, that between the two there is an undeniable formal analogy. We will go even further and affirm that it is precisely in the Christian faith that a synthesis of myth and *logos* is to be found. We know in fact that the dimension of *logos* is without any possible doubt an integral part of the Christian faith; yet this latter cannot be said to be a faith composed of reason alone, not only because it is suprarational by nature but also and furthermore because its structure contains a mythical element that we cannot modify without damaging the vitality and wholeness, let alone the popular appeal, of the faith.²⁹⁰ The Christian faith presents to the truth a complete openness that can find its expression only in *logos* and myth together. Christian truth is not a construction of *logos* and *logos* alone; it is also and primarily a mystery.²⁹¹ Whether the same is equally true for all authentic faith is a question that can be left open.

Reason alone is incapable, by its proposition or explanation, of accounting wholly for the phenomenon of faith. Similarly, myth alone cannot carry or encompass the Christian message. (In a word, the explanation of the Father that is afforded us by the Trinitarian intuition is not in terms solely of the *logos* but also and simultaneous of the Holy Spirit.) If we receive the message with *logos* alone, one removes from it a great part of its content. Even if it is free from error, this "rational" doctrine cannot be mistaken for the "gospel." If, on the other hand, we receive the Christian message as being exclusively in the category of myth, one empties it of its whole substance. Only authentic faith can reconcile the two extremes. Speech to which I "listen" (*ex auditu*)²⁹² conveys to me the message; a myth is recounted to me; and I "believe" in this word on account of something that wells up powerfully within me that I can scarcely define or even be conscious of experiencing.²⁹³ This faith is not purely

²⁹⁰ See Mt 11:25.

²⁹¹ See Col 1:26; 2:2; Eph 3:3; etc.

²⁹² See Rom 10:17.

²⁹³ "Ille etenim vere credit, quid exercet operando quod credit" (Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia* XXVI.9 (PL 76.1202B), *apud Breviarium Romanum, lectio IX, die 21 decembris*. See Jas 2:14–19.

mythical—that is to say, it does not exist exclusively outside time and free from all intellectual content. This faith discloses to me a *logos* within the myth, a historicity and even an event, though this last-named transcends time. This faith is linked to a tradition and is brought to full flowering in a community, which serves not only as a framework for it but also as its embodiment, being itself an object of faith.²⁹⁴

Remythization of the Christian Message

From what has just been said, then, can we not deduce the urgent necessity to rediscover the mythical elements of the gospel? No system of metaphysics, however perfect and free from error it might be, could replace the parables of the Gospels nor match this latter in the breadth and depth of their dimensions. From demythization we can expect at most the highly provisional interpretation in a given temporal and cultural framework of one aspect of the gospel. To rediscover the plenitude of the gospel message, the only possible way is that of a child like spirit; to try to understand the parable and the mythical basis of the word of God and to translate both into practice.

It is clear that the remythization of which we speak involves no discrediting of *logos* or refutation of dogmas. It simply seeks to show that Christ is also Man, son of Mary, that he has a body as well as a soul, and that ultimately dogmas are channels, not idols.

If, on account of the recent evolution of human history, the Christian message has been translated into "metaphysical" terms, if furthermore it has been felt that theology cannot be regarded as a "supernatural metaphysic," and is now finally admitted that the scientific, cosmological, and psychological notions of the Bible are outworn, even so it is not admissible to reject *logos* out of hand or abolish myth; rather, an attempt must be made to recover, by the contrivance of a serious *transmythization*, the full significance of the gospel.

The process of interpretation in metaphysical terms can be illustrated by a typical example: the renowned passage of the Old Testament in which God reveals himself to Moses as He Who Is.²⁹⁵ It was Western Christianity that was destined, or doomed, first to metaphysicize this passage and then to give it an ontological meaning.

First of all, we would like to point out that we have no objection to an interpretation that is defended by a large part of Christian tradition.²⁹⁶ We do hasten to add, however, that we are dealing here with an *interpretation* and furthermore of *one* interpretation among many possible ones.²⁹⁷

This being established, we could go on to draw attention to the fact that the ontological interpretation of Christian tradition, though differing from the metaphysic of being of a Plato,²⁹⁸ Aristotle,²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ In the Christian religion, Christ is the one and only Mediator (1 Tim 2:5). The church is not a hyphen, but the bride of Christ, his body, etc.

²⁹⁵ "I Am who I Am"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you'" (Exod 3:14).

²⁹⁶ See the highly important chapter 3 of É. Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1944), where he traces the development of this thought, affirming moreover that there is a metaphysic, not *in*, but *of* the exodus.

²⁹⁷ We should even be inclined to think that patristic interpretation of this text tends less in the direction of the *ipsum esse* of St. Thomas Aquinas (*Sum. theol.* I, q.13, a.11) than in that of the living God, Lord, and Master of the following verses.

²⁹⁸ See τὸ παντελὺς ὄν (*Sophist* 248E).

²⁹⁹ See *Metaphys* III.1.1003a31, etc.

or Philo of Alexandria,³⁰⁰ allows from the first for another meaning. It is significant to a degree that this same formula of the book of Exodus is explored in India as an expression, not of divinity, but of humanity.³⁰¹

We must take care not to commit the error of replacing one metaphysic with another. While leaving the biblical passage as it is untouched, we would like just to make it more accessible to the hearer, even though we are obliged to express ourselves in philosophical terms.³⁰²

The text has at least a fourfold meaning:

1. First, there is a supratemporal meaning. The text is intended to convey that Yahweh is the one who was, is, and shall be.³⁰³ This assertion is not peculiar to the Old Testament;³⁰⁴ it is also to be found in Greek³⁰⁵ and Indian³⁰⁶ sources, and it is echoed in the words of Christ³⁰⁷ in the New Testament³⁰⁸ and also in tradition.³⁰⁹

2. Second is an exclusive meaning.³¹⁰ There is no other God than the God of Israel.³¹¹ He is the Unique One.³¹² It is in this sense that Jesus at a later date will repeat these words and the Jews find in them an affirmation of his divinity, for the unicity of God was for Israel

³⁰⁰ He uses not only the expression $\delta \omega \nu$, but also $\tau \delta \delta \nu$. Nevertheless he sees in $\delta \omega \nu$ the name that is properly given only to God. See *De Abrahamo* 121, *apud* F. Büchsel, *art.* "εἰμι," in G. Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2, p. 397.

³⁰¹ What we have said of the personality and impersonality of God has its roots, perhaps, here. See *SB* I.9.3.23 (*aham ya evasmi so 'smi*), "Now I am whom I am." See also *AB* VII.24, *apud* A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p. 39n129.

³⁰² Reverting to what has been said above on the primacy of the principle of identity, we would like to point out that many Westerners are to be observed interpreting the name of Yahweh ("I am who I am") in accordance with the principle of identity (Yahweh the immutable, always identical to himself). See F. König (ed.), *Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1956), *art.* "Jahwe."

³⁰³ See F. Büchsel, *loc. cit.*

³⁰⁴ See *Isa* 40:28; 41:4; 43:10–11; 44:6; 48:12; etc.

³⁰⁵ See the wonderful oracle of Dodon: Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστίν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται, ὡ μεγάλη Ζεὺ (*apud* F. Büchsel, *loc. cit.*). See also Plato, *Timaeus* 37Dff., and also the renowned formulation of Parmenides, οὐδὲ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἐστίν ὁμοῦ πᾶν, ἔν, συνεχές [it never was nor will be, for it now is, all at once, one and together]. See J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Black, 1930), p. 174. See also in *Le Livre des morts des anciens Égyptiens* (*Papyrus de Nebensi* LXIV.2), where the dead being united to Osiris say, "I am yesterday, the dawn (of today), and tomorrow (always)" (ed. P. Barguet [Paris: Cerf, 1967], p. 102).

³⁰⁶ *Puruṣa evedam sarvaṃ yad bhūtam yac ca bhavyam*—God, (the *Puruṣa*) is all that has been and will be: *RV* X.90.2. See also Ramanuja, *Gita-bhāṣya* on IX.19, where he interprets the *sad-āsat* (being and non-being), which refers to God in the *Gita*, in the sense of Present (*sat*) and Past-Future (*asat*). See also *MandU* 1; *KathU* IV.12–13; etc.

³⁰⁷ See *Jn* 8:58, where the antithesis between γενέσθαι (of Abraham) and εἰμι (of Jesus) is strongly emphasized. Jesus uses the verb εἰμι to show that he transcends time. See also *Jn* 13:19, where Jesus once again indicates his transcendence by the use of the words ἐγὼ εἰμι.

³⁰⁸ See *Rev* 1:4–8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5.

³⁰⁹ See St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* XXX.18; etc.

³¹⁰ See, for example, W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, or M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, on the relevant passages in the Old Testament.

³¹¹ See *Dt* 6:4; cf. *Mk* 12:29; *Ecclus* 1:8; etc.

³¹² See *Exod* 20:2ff; *Isa* 44:6–8; 45:5ff.; etc. See *Qur'an* 20.14. See, on the other hand, the Hindū conception in *BG* IX.15ff. or the following testimony: "The Hindū Īśvara (Supreme God) is not a jealous God, because all Gods are aspects of Him imagined by his worshippers" (A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 160).

his first attribute.³¹³

3. Our text also signifies that Yahweh is the One who is there, as if he were saying, "I am there, I who speak to you and make myself known to you in this place, I who take care of you and of all your brothers and desire to deliver you; I am as present now as I was with your father Abraham when I made with him my covenant."³¹⁴ The passage thus expresses the providence and daily care of God for his people. The God of Israel is an unseen God, terrible and transcendent, but he is at the same time a father, a betrothed, a friend who reveals himself today in order to assure his servant: "I am there and because I was and am always with you I have seen the extent of your suffering at the hand of the Egyptians; I have decided to save you and to choose you, Moses, to be my prophet."

4. It is the fact that it stresses the particularity of the character of Yahweh that imparts special power to this passage. Yahweh is here revealed less as Being than as the I. He does not say, "I am Being"; he says, "I am I," I am Who I am. The accent is on the subject, the I. He has no predicate, not even the predicate of the verb "to be." He does not reveal himself as a substance but as a verbum, as act, as person—that is to say, not as "is" but on the contrary as "am," for God, the God of the Old Testament at any rate, cannot speak of himself in the third person; he can only say "I." Even if we were to supply a predicate, we ought not to translate the text by, "I am Being"; we should say rather, "I am I." Forthwith this interpretation falls into line with that of Christ in his discourse on the words ἐγώ εἰμι where he applies these words to himself.³¹⁵

Having learned by bitter experience that we must not mistake the Bible for a book of science (and certainly not of the natural sciences) and that we therefore cannot rely upon it as source material for discovering the age of the earth or of mankind, or the nature of the heavenly bodies or even of life itself, we must also be on our guard against making the Bible a book of concepts or a compendium of metaphysics.³¹⁶ Thence would arise a grave danger, for the revelation would then appear to be conceptual in character, a metaphysical teaching or the dogmatism of a particular school of thought. Consequently, one would end by talking of the revelation in terms of ideas or metaphysical dogmas, thus excluding all possibility of an encounter with other religions, even with other currents of thought, and making the Christian faith the monopoly of one particular culture or determined system of metaphysics or even of a particular separate class.³¹⁷

³¹³ See Jn 10:31–39. An exclusivism that is interpreted by the mystique of being as an ontic exclusivism. God is thus the unique being. An encounter between Advaitic theology and Christian Scholasticism would prove very illuminating. See, for the latter, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum theol.* I, q. 103, a. 1, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 16, ad 12; *ibid.*, q. 18, a. 2, ad 5; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 3, ad 4; etc. See also "Hoc tam singulare, tam summum esse: nonne in comparationibus huius, quidquid hoc non est, iudicas potius non esse quam esse?" (St. Bernard, *De consideratione* V.6 [PL 182.796A]). "Hoc est ergo quod ait: ergo sum qui sum," continues Meister Eckhart, who makes much of this text (*Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 18 [LW II.24–25]). See, for Eckhart and for other references, the chapter titled "Ego sum qui sum," in V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Vrin, 1960), pp. 97–174.

³¹⁴ "The accent falls, then, on the aspect of liberation" (W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1, *Gott und Volk*, p. 116).

³¹⁵ See Jn 8:24–28. See, in addition, the testimony of Paul: χάρις δὲ Θεοῦ εἰμι ὁ εἰμι (1 Cor 15:10 [for God: "ego sum qui sum"; for us: "gratia sum qui sum"]). He continues: οὐκ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡ χάρις.

³¹⁶ See C. J. de Vogel, "Ego sum qui sum" et sa signification pour une philosophie chrétienne, *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 35(4) (1961): pp. 337–55; G. Lambert, "Que signifie le nom divin YHWH?" *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 74 (1952): pp. 897–915; etc.

³¹⁷ The fact that the church has never subscribed to such an idea should not perturb anyone. Cf.,

As long as we do not reduce it to metaphysics and avoid giving to it any sort of artificial interpretation, the message remains simple. The function of the liturgy, provided it is truly alive, is precisely this: to present the message perfectly in its luminous simplicity, that is to say, as it is, without useless superfluities and without the adoption of palliatives in accordance with individual preference.³¹⁸ It is in the liturgy and in the liturgy alone that is to be found this synthesis of the true, the good, and the beautiful, which, paradoxically and without abandoning its triple aspect, goes to make up the dynamism and vigor of true simplicity. If we remain content with proclaiming the message as a true doctrine or a guide to good conduct or even simply as a beautiful idea, it will always be superficial and incomplete, and hence false, bad, and lacking in beauty. If, moreover, we seek to construct a synthesis by artificial means, we shall be unable to take as our foundation one of these three transcendentals without superseding and neglecting the other two.³¹⁹ It is in the liturgy alone, in as much as it springs from a deeper source, that we may not only preach, set forth, and comment on the gospel message but also ourselves realize and lay hold upon it.³²⁰ Now, liturgy consists not of *logos* alone or of myth or of parable; it is the sum total: *logos*, myth, parable, action, and contemplation. If the mythical dimension has been somewhat lost to sight, then it is necessary to lay stress once again on remythization.

The point we would like to convey is easily grasped when we recall that, in the thinking of the church fathers, the liturgy (and hence even the church and Christianity) incorporates the three following correlative dimensions: the Eucharist, *logos*, and icon, in other words, the divine food, the divine word, and the divine image. It is these three and these alone that constitute the liturgy and are the real symbols of God on earth.³²¹ This triad, however, acquires its full significance only when it is performed in the Holy Spirit and leads to the Father. The epoch in which we are now living is undergoing a certain dismemberment that evidences itself in the displacement of these three elements. The word has been rationalized and robbed of its sacred character, and there has arisen in consequence the particular type of iconoclasm we witness today. Thus, it is not surprising if the Eucharist, snatched from its living context, appears now to be simply an isolated factor (at best, a sacrament for the individual). Liturgical imagery is not slow to learn that it must have aesthetic value, and we hear talk of a crisis in "sacred art." But in reality everything is part of a living unity. The Eucharist is the εἰκὼν κατ' ἐξοχήν,³²² the word is, as it were, the splendor and expression of the image, while the icon is the image of the cosmos, the church, and the household of God.³²³ In the liturgy

for example, for the early centuries, A. V. Seumoïs, *La papauté et les missions au cours des six premiers siècles*, and for recent days, the papal encyclicals on missions of Pius XI, Pius XII, and John XXIII. The same could be said of Protestant missions.

³¹⁸ The development of this thought could well have a certain importance for the theology of missions. "Predicatio Evangelii minima est omnibus disciplinis . . . Confer hujuscemodi doctrinam dogmatibus philosophorum, et libris eorum, et splendori eloquentiae, et compositioni sermonum: et videbis quanta minor sit ceteris seminibus sementi Evangelii" (St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Evangelium Matthaei*, 13:32 (PL 26.90B), apud *Breviarium Romanum*, lectio VIII, Dominica VI post Epiphaniam).

³¹⁹ See, for example, F. Schiller, *Die Künstler*:

Nur durch das Morgentor des Schönen
dringst du in der Erkenntnis Land.

This is good Romanticism, but Romanticism all the same.

³²⁰ The effort of H. U. von Balthasar to restore to the beautiful its place in theology seems to us to have immense importance in this connection. See *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*.

³²¹ See 1 Jn 5:7-8, commentary on which would lead us too far afield.

³²² See Col 1:15 together with Jn 14:9; etc.

³²³ See the excellent dissertation of P. Hendrix, "Die Ikone als Mysterium," in *Vom christlichen*

everything speaks of a "going-beyond," yet at the same time nothing is rejected or despised. Icons all refer us to the living word of the good news, the word leads us to the Christ of the Eucharist, and the Son takes us to the Father. In the liturgy the history of the world unfolds in a definitive manner,³²⁴ but as long as we remain in this world, the Father continues to point out to us his Son,³²⁵ the Son sends us his Spirit who gathers us into one church,³²⁶ and the church takes us to the temple where by means of her images, material in form but spiritual in content, and her sacraments, she leads us back to God.³²⁷ In the liturgy the stress is upon mediation rather than proclamation; the liturgy is a mediatrix (with an authentically priestly mission) of the divine life; it is a sacrament united in an intimate fashion with both the offering and the sacrifice.

All this, then, gives us to understand that a transmythization has no intention whatever of impugning *logos*; it intends merely to denounce its monopoly. Its chief aim is, certainly, to open up the message more widely to all, but it also aims at bringing about conviction that traditional worship is the milieu best able to effect this and the means of rendering present the One who is declared. It is there, seemingly, that myth has its role to play.³²⁸

Transmythization has in addition another analogous task to fulfill with regard to Hinduism, and this will be the subject of the following paragraphs.

Remythization of Hinduism

If the remythization of the Christian message, undertaken with faith, leads to a rediscovery of its mythical elements, so also the remythization of Hinduism will most surely disclose, on the one hand, the profound significance of the Hindū myths, and next, will show, make known, and realize Christian truths in a new light, thereby manifesting their true depth.

The inverse is also and equally true, and Christian remythization cannot fail to have an effect upon Hinduism: the Indic myths will, in such a remythization, discover their "plenary meaning," which can only be discerned in the light of the Christian faith (the plenary meaning, whatever it may be, is always known to the Lord and is revealed by that faith that I shall call "Christian"), but which constitutes a revelation of a character peculiar to India. There is sometimes a danger of paying no attention in the revelation to the "object" that is disclosed. Jesus came to reveal the promised messiah and above all to incarnate the Lord, to actualize him in the sphere of time. This is only the beginning of a process of growth that is brought to completion in the Father through the Spirit. However, we must neither stop at the person of Jesus nor allow it to disappear; rather, we must believe in the Christ revealed by Jesus. We

Mysterium, pp. 182-91.

³²⁴ An exegesis of 1 Cor 15:28 is needed here.

³²⁵ See Mt 17:15; Lk 9:35; Mk 9:7; 2 Pet 1:17; etc.

³²⁶ See Lk 10:16; Mt 10:40; etc.

³²⁷ See the whole liturgy, for example, the Prefaces, Consecration of churches, etc.

³²⁸ "What is then myth?—An old story, lived by the ancestors and handed down to the descendants. But the past is only one aspect of it. The true myth is inseparably bound up with the cult. The once-upon-a-time is also a now, what was is also a living event. Only in its twofold unity of then and now does a myth fulfill its true essence. The cult is its present form, the re-enactment of an archetypal event, situated in the past, but in essence eternal" (W. F. Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, p. 29). We shall not enlarge upon this question, on which in any case it is not within the scope of this book to take up a position, but we nevertheless are of the opinion that the quotation is a good illustration of what we intended to say. For the rest, see H. Rahner, "The Christian Mystery and the Pagan Mysteries," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, pp. 337-401.

can no longer consider Christ as simply the Messiah for Israel or merely the savior of the two-thousand-year-old Christian religion. It is the savior who works everywhere that we must find, and the question is one of discovering the particular relationship between Christ and all the expressions of the Lord. Nor can we stop even there. The Lord is indeed the Way, the landmark that indicates the source, the Father, the goal—but this is only effectively so for us if we enter into the dynamism of the Spirit.

This is true also for Hinduism. In other words, if we desire not to place a stumbling block to the message of the gospel nor to repeat the refusal of the Jews and the first Judeo-Christians, we are obliged to agree that the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth is also of direct concern to Hinduism. Christ asks to be born, so to speak, in the bosom of Hinduism and to make himself known there, just as he was secretly present in the philosophy of the ancient Greeks under forms that were sometimes misshapen or vague. This birth, difficult though it may be, is strictly necessary, if the revelation of the Lord in India is to assume its full splendor.

In the bosom of the Christian faith, we may note, it goes without saying that this re-mythization is not to be thought of in terms of an evolution of a "modernist" trend, where no distinction is made between the natural and the supernatural.

Christ was not Moses or David or the rock in the desert, and yet the Scriptures had spoken of him,³²⁹ and he himself avers that he "was" indeed Moses, David, the rock. The myth had to turn into parable, and the parable links the two. Kṛṣṇa is by no means Christ, nor is his myth Christian. Yet, all allowances being made (given the particularity of the Old Testament situation), it is only through the myth of Kṛṣṇa that Christ can reveal himself to a Vaisnavite believer. The myth as understood by him may change, but the parable will remain: for the believer, the true Kṛṣṇa (if he is viewed, that is, as more than an idol) becomes the very person of the Lord. There is something precious here for Christians also, if they realize that for them the true Kṛṣṇa is not "Kṛṣṇa," but Christ, for Christ is, in very truth, the Lord. For a believing Hindū, a demythized message loses all significance. The idea of Kṛṣṇa needs to be transformed or even perhaps eliminated, but the believer does not cling to concepts; he adheres to the myth—and the myth is situated outside the sphere of logical truth. Thus a demythized message falls upon deaf ears, and the believer does not find himself affected by its content. Myth is, in a certain sense, nontemporal. It is possible for it to be transmuted and even die, but only to come to birth once more to a new life in some other form. It is only in the eventuality of Christ becoming manifest in the depths of myth that Hinduism would "comprehend" him and be impelled to come to a decision. Parable neither ignores nor smoothes out differences; it contents itself with putting things in relation with each other. It is not a question of the kingdom of God *being* seed, or ten virgins, and yet this imagery remains the deepest expression of the Christian message.

If in the eyes of Israel the rock could truly *be* Christ,³³⁰ in the same way it might be said that for the great majority of Indians Rama also could *be* Christ. The rock was Christ for all those who lived before his day and who drank of the living water that flowed from it.³³¹ Rama can also be Christ for those who live in a manner of speaking before Christ, since the Lord has not appeared to them in the person of Christ. How can a stone be Christ? It is because the stone is a symbol of Christ. If this symbol were merely a subjective sign, then how would it stand as a symbol of Christ for those who do not know him? It was therefore the real symbol of Christ. It was in fact Christ who was already there and at work in quenching the thirst of some, reviving the courage of others, saving the people and interceding for the

³²⁹ See Jn 5:39; Lk 24; 27:44; etc.

³³⁰ 1 Cor 10:4.

³³¹ See Exod 17:6–7.

children of Israel with the Father. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same thing applies to Hinduism.³³²

It is not, therefore, a question of any conceptual and solely philosophical interpretation of Hinduism in consonance with Christian theology, nor of a sort of intellectual rape or dialectical violence, but rather of an existential ongoing process springing out of, precisely, myth. Myth is susceptible to transmythization—something that is not possible with *logos*. *Logos* qua *logos* has its own particular and unambiguous meaning, whereas myth "hallmarks" nothing; it constitutes simply an indication and consequently allows for several possible interpretations.³³³

It is of significance, furthermore, that the principal Indic myths are nowhere to be encountered in their entirety. The *samhitās* themselves, not to speak of later literature, content themselves with references or brief allusions to myths supposedly well-known.³³⁴ Myth is always presupposed; it is never static. Myth does not admit of being docketed or classified; it demands to be heard and believed.³³⁵ To receive myth, one must be prepared to enter into its dynamism. From the outside one hears merely fables. One has eyes to see and ears to hear, but the heart is hardened and the spirit noncomprehending.³³⁶

Now here we find ourselves no longer in the realm of intellectual discussion, but in the realm of worship and of preparation for worship. This is to say that the message is not addressed solely and directly to the intelligence but to the whole person, and that its sole aim is to lead its hearers to belief. To believe, moreover, is not in the first instance to understand but to adore. It is only later that there comes the feeling of knowing oneself to be understood, which in turn brings about the beginning of comprehension. All this happens within worship.

Man desires salvation; he desires to "see." This "seeing" includes an element of *logos* but *logos* does not constitute the whole. Furthermore, Man desires to be the artisan of his own salvation. This he can only achieve through worship, and for this he must cultivate the right disposition of heart. *Logos* prepares his reason, while myth prepares his heart and his will. It is grace that enables him to perform the act of worship, but it is faith that has in the first place disclosed this path to him.³³⁷

How this transmythization is to be accomplished is a difficult question with which we do not deal directly in this study. Suffice it to say that its justification does not reside in the fact that it corresponds so completely to the demands of the message but rather in the certitude that it serves the truth.

Consequently, the dialogue we envisage would not only itself be a dialogue in depth but would constitute an enrichment and deepening of the two religions. There is no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.³³⁸ This is still true for contemporary Western Christianity. If present-day Christianity were ready for such a kenosis, it would experience a resurrection that would be the more significant and glorious. The same is true also for Hinduism.

³³² It is a question not only of the "unknown God" (Acts 17:23) but also of the "ignoto Christo."

³³³ "Philosophy endeavours to duplicate the world. It establishes a world of ideas. Myth is situated at the grassroots of existence. . . . The word is inextricable from the thing; the name not only indicates the thing but even and also 'is' that thing" (G. Gusdorf, *Mythe et métaphysique* [Paris: Flammarion, 1953], p. 21).

³³⁴ Practically all Indic myths have been reconstituted out of scattered fragments. Hence the numerous versions of one and the same myth.

³³⁵ "Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum (ῥῆμα) Christi" (Rom 10:17). With reference to listening and obedience, cf. Ps 17 (18):45.

³³⁶ See Mt 13:14–15; Isa 6:9–10; etc.

³³⁷ See Mk 10:51; Lk 18:41.

³³⁸ Jn 15:13.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

If we were asked to sum up in a few words the purpose of this book, we should say that it aims not only at promoting a renewal of worship but also and above all at the integration of worship into contemporary culture and even into the daily life of contemporary man. We are suffering today from a tendency toward dispersion; our religious life is characterized by a strange trichotomy, for the three orientations in which it finds expression appear to have lost their intrinsic unity. Spiritual orientation, otherwise called *theology*, is becoming a purely intellectual quest for truth; *piety* dispenses with study, and *liturgy* goes its own way, dissociating itself from both the others and no longer providing a complete and well-integrated training. We must take steps to recover this lost unity, to reestablish it where necessary and to live it in depth in response to new requirements.

This means that theology must be basically spiritual and must be closely united with the liturgy. The study of theology must not be divorced from contemplation nor prayer be separated from the liturgy. We must restore to theology its salvific character, not that salvation should be subservient to the conclusions of theology, but because theology, as representing the intellectual aspect of religion, is essential to it. Spirituality ought not to be referred exclusively to the "pious" part of a man's inner life and thus be denied all contact with theology, just as piety likewise should be nourished by the liturgy in which it has its roots. Certain concrete examples can readily be given of the situation that prevails today: morality disconnected from dogmatics, examination of conscience without reference to the sacraments, spiritual exercises removed from their proper liturgical context, an ascetic life lived in isolation, to quote just a few instances. These, however, are simply phenomena indicative of a far deeper tearing asunder. What was said earlier on the subject of prayer and worship is just one more proof of it. *Jñāna*, *bhakti*, and *karman* are not separate. Theology, morals, and worship are bound together. Contemplation and action are simply two dimensions of one person's life. The true, the good, the beautiful, and being itself are only one. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy cannot be separated. Even if the fall of Man destroyed the unity that existed between them, this unity has been restored by the Redemption. Heaven is no longer the *only* abode of the good, and as for salvation, it is nothing else than plenitude of being. Religion is not solely a mediator of truth. Finally, all things converge toward the Lord who is Christ, who manifests himself as the way, the truth, and the life, not as pure divinity nor yet as a divine man, but as that theandric reality that is at one and the same time Creator, Savior, and Glorifier. A reflection on the meaning of worship in Hinduism gives rise to this new (and yet very ancient) insight so necessary for our own times.

It was not only within our proposed scope to treat of Christian worship in itself, nor for its own sake. We desire, in conclusion, to add certain reflections upon the subject of Hinduism and in the name of Hinduism. Perhaps they will help to make it a little better understood.

India and Hinduism are not looking to Christianity for welfare projects or for impressive and successful educational undertakings organized by the church. People and government alike are endeavoring themselves to build, with the help of Western-style technology, a more

prosperous state. Nor do they look to Christianity for its doctrine, still poorly understood, nor its institutions, which they mistrust. As a visible institution, the church is alien to Hindū mentality. What is sought from Christianity is Christ and Christ alone.¹ But the Christ who exercises so great an attraction for the Hindū people and one that is so observable for more than a century is less the Jesus of history, whom they regard invariably as a simple *avatāra* alongside many others, than the living Christ, who is above history and who dwells in the hearts of those who love him. At her deepest, without being aware of it, India feels an urge to communicate; she is devoured by hunger for the Eucharist. She would not know what to do with an abstract God or a Man-God caught in the meshes of history. What Hinduism yearns for is an encounter with a theandric reality *both* temporal *and* transhistorical.

The house is packed full. Indeed, the apostles are tightly ringed around Christ² so that nobody can find an entrance. It is then that some men open up the roof and quietly make their way to Jesus. They bring with them a paralytic. Now it is the sabbath; the rules of the synagogue are immutable. Yet without these men who win for him a bodily physical contact with the Master, the poor paralytic would remain crippled. In the same way, the deep meaning of Hindū worship is bound up with the desire that for many millennia has haunted the Indian soul—namely, to achieve a real experience of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not simply an internal reality belonging to the church or a purely Christian affair. ("He who is not against you is with you.") The Eucharist, in addition, makes the church, and the church makes the Eucharist,³ but this Eucharist nurtures the deep aspiration of the world toward the church, while the earth supplies the material for the Eucharist, just as Christ also is the product of the earth and the son of Man in a sacramental manner.⁴

What, then, are we to do? What steps are we to take to enable Hinduism to pass under the roof of the church and place itself at the feet of the Master? This is a question that goes beyond our present theme and our competence, for the house seems full already. There is no room left in Christianity! Must we open a hole in the roof, or is it better to request those who are standing around Christ to pack themselves together more tightly in order to make more space? We shall make no pronouncement on this. We have simply desired to show that we carry in our heart (and indeed on our shoulders) the aspiration of the Hindū people. Let us leave the Master to do the rest.⁵

¹ See Am 8:11.

² See Mk 2:1–2.

³ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Église* (Paris: Aubier, 1954). See also J. A. Jungmann, in *Herder-Korrespondenz* 15(1) (1960): p. 8.

⁴ "Die Schrift ist schwer und manchen Leuten unfassbar (aber) sie ist lautere Wahrheit. Wäre aber etwas darin, dem nicht genug Worte geliehen wären, so sollte man sie deshalb nicht beiseite tun. Denn es gebührt uns an Worten, wo immer wir von der göttlichen Natur reden sollen. Doch ist ihre Meinung lautere Wahrheit mit Christo in Christo. Des sei er ebenedeit und gelobt in alle Ewigkeit. Amen" (Brother Frank of Cologne, "Nachschrift," quoted in A. Dempf, *Vom inwendigen Reichtum*, p. 53).

⁵ See Lk 9:60.

Part Three

THE PROBLEM OF JUSTICE IN HINDŪ-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE*

"Hinduism and Christianity" is a title that expresses everything, and expresses nothing. Between everything and nothing, at least in Eastern cultures, there is still one thing: a very real void. I would like to speak of this thing that is neither everything nor nothing. And this will be the problem of justice seen in light of a certain Hindū tradition.

The kind of interreligious dialogue that is currently reappearing as a fundamental religious issue once again reveals to us that, even if we can make a distinction between religion and culture, it is not possible to separate them. Only the European parenthesis that we call the "Enlightenment" separates them because it reduces religion to an ideology. In Hinduism, this division is impossible. If religion ceases to be a lifestyle and that which gives a meaning to our existence, then it ceases to be what traditional India understands by *dharma*, which would be the translation of "religion." Let us recall that religion, in the most profound and simultaneously broad meaning of the word, awards life its ultimate meaning, and that culture lends its language to religion. Every language is a culturally conditioned language, and every culture is "in-formed," in the end, by an ultimate vision of reality that constitutes a phenomenological description of what religion is.

I would like to make three observations, each one of which, for greater clarity and to enable our dialogue, will be divided into three sections.

The first observation will be critical, the second descriptive (of the Hindū world), and the third dialogical (on the possible contribution of our study to interreligious dialogue).

* Original edition: "El problema de la justicia en el diálogo hindú-cristiano," in *Religiones de la tierra y sacralidad del pobre. Aportación al diálogo interreligioso*, (Barcelona: Claret, 1997), pp. 107–35. Trans. from Spanish by Carla Ros.

METHODOLOGY

This initial section is "critical" in the most precise sense of the word. It is not criticism. To criticize, in the Kantian sense, refers to methodology. I believe the wrong methodology has been applied in dealing with the interreligious dialogue, that is, the one consisting in assuming that religions share the same questions. We formulate questions and then expect others to give us answers. It seems as though asking about justice is the most natural and legitimate thing in the world. What does it tell us about justice? Well, first, the word "justice" does not have a univocal translation into any of the classical languages of India.

The Violence of Questions

My first point, therefore, will be to briefly describe what I have called "the violence of questions." This violence is quite subtle insofar as, too often, we are not even aware of it. When many orators who boast about being liberal say, "I am not here to give answers, only to ask questions," not only are they usually demagogic, but they are also subtly subjecting us to more violence than if they took the risk of giving us their opinions. Intercultural questions are not necessarily the same. The question in itself is already a certain hidden form of violence. *Percontari* means to submit to interrogation. We often ask before having learned to listen. Even when people whose intentions are not colonialist go to what they call the "Third World," they say they are going to ask because they do not want to teach, but rather to learn. They believe themselves to be humble because they limit themselves to asking, yet they do not realize that to ask means to subject the listener to violence; they cannot conceive that in many Eastern cultures, questions are experienced as a form of violence.

When tourists ask a rickshaw-man in India, "Do you know how to get to such and such place?" he will naturally answer *yes* because he does not dare say *no* to someone with a lot more money and culture than he has. It would be considered rude to say he does not know. That would be equivalent to telling those tourists that they have misunderstood the situation, and they are asking someone who does not know, just in order to humiliate him. To avoid making the tourist feel bad, the "native" prefers to deal with the embarrassment himself, and say *yes*. Only later, after going around and around in circles, the tourist realizes that the rickshaw-man did not know. He could not say *no*. This is the violence of the question. So, tourists naturally say that all Indians are liars.

Coming now back to our example of justice: *What* is being asked? *What* is it about? And here again, there are limits to the *what*. Our *what* does not necessarily have to be the same, nor does it have to be a *what* that encompasses it all, no matter how abstractly we conceive it.

The Limits of Questions

Furthermore, all questions are limited. The question limits the field in which the answer is an answer to the posed question. In a certain way, the question conditions the answer. It is the question that fixes the coordinates in which the answer can be answered. If, for example, I ask, "What is God?" in a Zen environment, I will be asking a question that is perfectly legitimate from the Western point of view. But, if the Zen master replies, "Mu!" and I get irritated because I have posed a serious question and he has replied in this manner, this indicates that I already knew more or less what the answer should be. Apparently, I expected him to tell me something that I could criticize or, at the very least, understand. Why do we not accept the answer? Because we had already conditioned it by the question itself. All in good faith, of course.

Questions have limits; they are not universal. Problems are neither seen the same way nor must they necessarily be the same. Let me give an example: the missionaries who went to Korea, already about 150 years ago, had to convince the "poor" Koreans that they were sinners, because, otherwise, how would the missionaries have been able to preach forgiveness to them? The White Fathers called this task "evangelization of the base": first, present them with the problem, so that, later, you can give them an answer. Right or not. Our task, if we wish to be truly intercultural, consists above all in discovering the problem (if this is how we want to call it) as it presents itself in the other culture, which is something we cannot see if we are not immersed in it. The consequences are immense. In sum, questions are limited, as well as violent.

The Inevitability of Questions

But questions are inevitable. The cure would be worse than the disease if we were to say, "Don't ask!" or if we were to repress asking. If a question arises, if there is something that concerns us and becomes a problem for us, it would be an intellectual, even Freudian, repression to prevent ourselves from asking. If we see something as a problem, the question is also inevitable. And if it is inevitable, it is undeniably legitimate, even if we must realize that it can be violent and that it conditions the response.

Perhaps, this way, we can reformulate the question, and instead of asking what justice is in Hinduism, we can try to penetrate into this other culture, tradition, or religion, to see the world from its point of view, and to see how that which makes our heart suffer because there is injustice comes about (and, maybe, is resolved) there. Then, in a certain way, we will reformulate the problem in terms not only of the other, but which could be our own. The dialogue that I have called "interreligious" is one that allows for fertilization between cultures, one that prevents us from suffocating in our own closed-off world. It is the "religious" act par excellence, as it re-binds us to people, to our fellow beings, which is the necessary condition for our re-ligation to the Mystery of Reality to be effective.

Questions are inevitable, but they must be reformulated. In this spirit, I dare reinterpret the appendix of the Gospel according to Mark (16:15) by making it say, "Go throughout the world to *listen* to the Word which already existed in the beginning." The first purpose of the missionary, the one still making sense, is not to preach, but to listen; and by listening, to establish a dialogue that benefits both sides, as both soils had already been tilled (by God himself).

When we approach other cultures with a different cosmovision, we must be aware that what we call "problems" may not be such in that context. Wanting to think that problems

are the same for the whole world is nothing more than another veiled form of colonialism. Colonialism, in point of fact, is a *monoculturalism* whose essence consists in believing that one can encompass the total scope of human experience from the point of view of *one* culture. That having been said, let us turn to the world of Hinduism.

THE HINDŪ WORLD¹

Hinduism Has No Essence

The first thing I should say is that Hinduism *is* not. It has no essence, in a double sense: it does not constitute the essence of any religion, nor does a Hindū doctrine exist. Hinduism is a cluster of doctrines and religions that have been labeled "Hinduism" from the outside. In fact, no traditional Hindūs would call themselves "Hindūs." It was first Muslims and then Britons who began to call that entire group, of more or less exotic peoples, that way. Hinduism, in this sense, does not present an essential consistency of any sort, and it is an oversimplification to speak of Hinduism as a religion or a compact doctrinal body. Within Hinduism there is great variety: materialists, "believers," "nonbelievers," monotheists, pantheists, polytheists, skeptics . . . everything. Hinduism is no more orthopraxis than it is orthodoxy.

Neither can we speak of Hinduism—this is a very important point—from a sociological-political point of view. The difference is clear if we compare it, for example, with Islam in some countries. For better or for worse, Islam has a living presence in the economic and political life of many nations, which creates problems for the predominant Western ideology in those states. With the exception of some Hindū movements that are only now beginning to reemerge, Hinduism took refuge in the people's private lives and in some popular manifestations, such as pilgrimages and other festivities that are still very much alive today.

It stopped being a political-economic-social force centuries ago, because sociologically Great Britain won—to put it one way. Except for women's resistance movements, practically all official institutions of India, which is the largest Hindū nation, are Western inventions: government, parliament, judicature, universities and schools, banks and commerce, transport, technology, and even the styles of dressing and eating. Hinduism as a way of life has taken refuge in private lives; this leads those who are still referred to as "Indologists" to falsely present Hinduism as the religion of interiority, or of popular festivities.

Hinduism Is an Existence

I said that Hinduism, as such, has no presence in the official and public life of states. One small exception is Nepal, which, even though the majority of the population does not declare itself to be Hindū, is the only state that officially professes that religion.

But I must immediately add that what best responds to the label "Hinduism" is a certain existential attitude of the peoples of that immense subcontinent, whatever ideology

¹ For further clarification of the following pages, see my contribution, "Some Aspects of Hindū Spirituality," in L. Sala Balust and B. Jiménez Duque (eds.), *Historia de la espiritualidad* (Barcelona: Flors, 1969), pp. 433–542.

or doctrine they may profess. Whoever does not explicitly reject tradition, whoever more or less voluntarily accepts their *karman*, recognizes by this very fact their incorporation in *sanātana-dharma* or perennial cosmic order, as some call it. As I already wrote thirty years ago in the aforementioned notes, Hinduism does not have an essence; it is an existence.

I say, then, that Hinduism remains very much alive as a way of being and of thinking, but that it hardly has a political form, and much less an economic one. The Hinduism of which I would like to speak practically died in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, perhaps in the fifteenth. But it does not cease to be potentially alive, subconsciously and as a way of thinking affecting the interpretation of the culture imported from the West. Hinduism is like the Sarasvatī, the subterranean river that joins the Ganges and the Yamuna in Allahabad, and that still has the power to congregate millions of people every twelve years to ritual ablutions. But after centuries of "subcutaneous" life, it now wants to appear in public life as well.

This explains the reaction, which we call "fundamentalist," of the new Hindū trends in the political and intellectual fields. Appealing to the fact that it is tolerant and that it absorbs everything, there are many who affirm that Hinduism is currently in danger of extinction and that it is necessary to rebel against this invasion on all levels: cultural, political, intellectual, economic, and so on. They want to form a Hindū political party because they declare that, if Hinduism is a culture, it has the right and the duty of forming its own political, economic, and cultural order without being forced to copy Western models (and badly so, on top of everything), which is what is happening nowadays.

These ideas explain, on the one hand, the complex life conditions of one-sixth of humanity, which is so poorly understood, or little known, to the rest of the world; and, on the other hand, the fact that I have not succumbed to the temptation, or fallen into the trap, of wanting to gallantly satisfy its legitimate curiosity by answering the question of justice without bearing in mind that the proposal itself is a diverse one. All in all, anyway, the issue is legitimate, as I have already said, and I am now going to reply.

Hinduism and Justice

How, then, could we describe the Hindū attitude that has a more or less direct relationship with what we refer to as the problem of justice? In the first place, I would ask: what is that worldview in which what we call "justice" can appear? I am not apologizing for not responding directly to the question, because in Hinduism the answer does not emerge from the Greek *dikaosyne* nor from the Latin or Christian *iustitia*. I also do not want to go looking for "homeomorphic equivalents" now, as I have done on other occasions.

So, as we are ready to start the discourse from those who have known neither Parmenides nor Heraclitus, I will connect directly to Patañjali and his school. Today, when yoga teachers are so abundant in the West, it seems basic to me to connect with something that we already know. I will begin, then, by quoting *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (the eight limbs of yoga), namely, that which unites us and simultaneously liberates us (*yukta* and *vimukta*) in order to attain fulfillment (which I do not even call "human," to avoid being misinterpreted, as if it were some sort of individualist technique: *kaivalya* is not the individual).

Here are the eight limbs of the Body of *yoga* that lead to liberation:

1. *Yama*, or abstention. It is usually translated as control or even self-control. The verb *yam* (*yacchati*) would suggest something more like that which sustains, maintains, limits. Without being in control of oneself, there is no possible order or justice. The five classical abstentions are:

a. *ahimsā*, which is usually translated as "nonviolence," even though the word that literally translates it is innocence (*in-nocens*, he who does no harm). There is a Vedic text that says, *na hiṃsayāt sarvā bhūtāni*, "not to harm any being," which presents itself as a universal obligation, *sādhāraṇa dharma*.

b. *satya*, or truth, veracity, which is not so much limited to the word and to behavior, but rather to the authenticity of being that which one truly is, which corresponds to that which one must be. This must-be is nothing more than the self-consciousness of being. What the being must be is not something which comes from outside. To express it in non-Indic terms: you cannot separate ethics from ontology. If we translate *sat* as "being," *satya* should be translated as "entity."

c. *asteya*, or avoidance of stealing, both in the material sense as well as, especially, in the mental one, that is, as in envy, ambition, jealousy, and all of those movements of the spirit that impel us to seize that which is not ours, that which is not personal. This is one of the great vows (*maha-vrata*) of Jainism.

d. *brahmacarya*, which is usually translated as chastity or celibacy, and whose literal translation is "that path that leads to *brahman*."

e. *aparigraha*, or nonpossessiveness, nonattachment, not clinging to anything, which Gandhi praised and which would correspond to detachment in St. John of the Cross, for example.

2. *Niyama* is the next "limb," and it corresponds to the positive counterpart of the previous one, that is, that which in classical Spanish is still called *observancia*, holy observance. We are far from mandates and prohibitions here. Here the traditional observances are also five:

- a. *śauca*, or purity in all its connotations, from bodily cleanliness to that of the heart.
- b. *santoṣa*, or calmness, contentment.
- c. *tapas*, or ardor, austerity, asceticism, discipline.
- d. *svādhyāya*, or study, meditation, internalization.
- e. *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, or devotion, consecration to God.

3. The so-called *āsanas*, or postures, that is, the seat of the body, which constitute the base to integrate the body in the path toward liberation or salvation.

4. *Prāṇāyāma*, or respiratory rhythm. *Prāṇa* is vital breath, life, spirit. As there is no place free from casuistry, there are specialists who maintain that our life has a determined number of breaths and that, consequently, the longer these are, the longer we will live.

5. *Pratyāhāra*, which literally means withdrawal into oneself, and it refers to liberating the senses of their objects, so that the mind is free of external influences and is allowed to be itself; without this there is no freedom and no liberation. We could recall here what in St. Ignatius of Loyola's time, and even before, was said about the "observance of the senses." This is not about repression, in the sense that we should not look, hear, but rather about freeing the senses from their objects, from their obsessions, from the fact that we let external things attract us, be it the cold, heat, or any other sensation. The senses must be ever more open and more awake, but less enslaved by their objects.

6. *Dhāraṇā*, which is usually translated as attention or concentration (of the mind, *citta*). Its opposite, nowadays, would be the dissipation and inflation caused by technology, which prevents in-depth consciousness in personal life.

7. *Dhyāna*, or meditation (one of the six *pāramitās* of Buddhism), is like the mind's flight without obstacles toward its proper place. Let us recall that the very word "meditation" is related to "medicine." Meditation could be the medicine that helps us retrieve the lost rhythms of our everyday lives. The fire of meditation (*dhyāna-agni*) burns the person's negative *karman*.

8. *Samādhi*, absorption, contemplation, ecstacy, union, divinization, or attainment of that which we truly are (*satyasya-satyam*).

. . .

I have thought it convenient to provide these brief details (which belong to only one school) in order to minimally introduce us in the world of Hinduism.

I could perhaps end by hinting at the four unmeasurable states. Even though these four states (*appamañña*) have been described by the Buddhist tradition, we must remember that this tradition emerged from the Hindū one, and that in this case, as in so many others, they convey the same spirit. These states that have no limits, that are infinite, are

mettā (benevolence, friendship)
karuṇā (compassion)
muditā (joy)
upekkhā (serenity)

If we lose one of these four unmeasurable states, any effort toward coming close to reality will be distorted. Without love, without sympathy, without optimism, and without equanimity (to offer another translation), there is no way to approach any problem, nor any way of knowing the reality in which we live. If I proceed without any of these four dispositions, which have no limits, that is, which admit no exceptions, I will deform the thing, I will look for solutions to problems that do not exist, problems that I myself have created.

. . .

We see, then, that there is no word for "justice" in the Hindū world. Nevertheless, the meaning of what we have just said would be deformed if everything were interpreted as an individualist rule of conduct ignoring what in the Western latitudes we call "justice." It would be wrong, in the first place, because, within classical Hinduism, the modern meaning of individualism does not even exist. Human beings are persons (networks of relationships), not mere individuals (independent monads). In the second place, the field of the aforementioned yoga is a collective one.

The fact that we do not have a term with which we can translate the word "justice" does not mean that there are no homeomorphic equivalents that fulfill a corresponding function.

Indeed, the term that comes closest to the concept of justice is the same word that is usually used to translate "religion," that is, *dharma*, coming from the root *dhar-* (*dher-* in Indo-European languages), which means to sustain, support, maintain. *Dharma* is that which holds together. *Dharma* can be translated in many different ways, one of which is "religion," and another is "justice." *Dharma* is that which maintains the universe in coherence and harmony through the free participation of the human being, so that the world does not destroy itself. There is a well-known saying from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (II.20, 25) that shows us the action of the wise man directed to preserving the world with no attachment: *lokasaṁgraha*. *Dharma* would therefore be the homeomorphic equivalent of the notion of justice in the West.

The fact that there is one word for "religion" and "justice" could be a liberating insight for the West, which, for too long, has mistaken religion for a simple doctrine and the teaching of religion for a more or less sectarian indoctrination of a determined confession, instead of understanding it as something that belongs to the human condition itself. "Christianity and justice" would then be nothing more than a redundancy.

There is another word to which the notion of a certain distributive and immanent justice is sometimes equated: *karman*. *Karman* is inflexible: our actions have results; we will reap the fruits of our actions in the future; there is no coincidence, and "you do the crime, you pay the time" or your children will pay. There is an immanent justice that nobody can escape. You reap what you sow. Cosmic order is fair, and it settles the score in this or in another world. No human action can avoid this inflexible law that bestows responsibility on the activity of human beings in such a way that all actions have cosmic repercussions, and anything that is carried out entails a result, whether good or bad. Nobody can escape.

Undoubtedly, the law of *karman* may give rise to an excessive inflexibility. Everything is related to everything (*sarvam-sarvātman*), so that our responsibility is universal, and the modern excuse that "I am not hurting anyone" or that "nobody will know" is not valid for Hinduism. "Every hair on your head has been counted" (Mt 10:30). Divine justice is implacable. God could not even forgive His own Son, as a similarly minded Christian theology would tell us. But it is not my concern here to criticize Christian theology; I will limit myself to Hinduism.

There is another fundamental notion in Indic culture that is convenient to consider in relation to that of *karman*. We must overcome the modern tendency toward specialization, which leads to the fragmentation of global intuitions, and even deforms them when we try to understand them by applying scientific and Cartesian categories. Another example would be to caricature a certain Christianity as the religion of sin, disconnecting it from forgiveness and mercy. In our case, we are referring to the a-dualist relationship between *karman* and grace in Hinduism.

Along with the law of *karman*, in the vast majority of Indic traditions, especially in the south of India, there is grace, *aruḷ* (Tamil). This is not the place to introduce distinctions between *prasāda*, *anugraha*, *dayā*, *kṛpā*, and so on. Suffice it to say that, along with the law of *karman*, there is a Deity who is superior to this law and can forgive and annihilate *karman*, and undo the whole law of distributive, commutative justice. It would be fitting to remember, by the way, that until very recently, justice (*karman*, if you wish) was never alone in Europe. The institutions that were in charge of administering justice were called Ministries, that is, Services "of Grace and Justice." They wanted to remind us that there is no justice without grace. Perhaps the modern world has clung to justice and has forgotten grace. We have applied quantitative modules to justice, like to everything else. Perhaps this is why prisons in every country are so crowded.

Be that as it may, let us go on speaking of Hinduism. We should avoid both justifications as well as caricatures. The most elaborate theologies of grace are possibly found in the Indic culture. Suffice it to mention Rudolf Otto's book as an introduction. We have paid the greatest attention to the reality of grace within theistic systems, for obvious reasons. All of this is also obviously related to the notion of God as Love: recalling the *nāsadiya śukta*, the famous Vedic Hymn of the Origins, which tells us that "in the beginning there was Love" (RV X.129.4), and its echo in the *Atharva-veda*, which calls "Love the First-Born, more sublime than the Gods" (AV IX.2.19). It is love as God's grace which can annihilate *karman*.

There is a reality, divine reality, that is in no way subject either to the law of *karman*, to the law of causality, or to the law of the principle of identity. It can change cosmic order, as

it rests on God. That is to say, there is no justice without grace, due to something on which perhaps the West—including Christianity, conditioned by Greece—has meditated very little. There is no justice without grace because justice is not the effect of an inexorable Reason; justice is not the conclusion of a syllogism but rather the fruit of grace itself. Perhaps this will also be useful to illuminate what St. Paul means, quoting Exodus, when he says that "if God wants to show mercy on someone, He does so, and if He wants to harden someone's heart, He does so" (Rom 9:18).

In short, grace and justice go together. "Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice" is a well-known biblical text (Hos 6:6, quoted in Mt 9:13 and 12:7, both times by Jesus), which could be interpreted as meaning that justice is not what is necessary for the stability of order, but rather the grace that justice brings with it—and justification, as Paul would say. In short, those who speak of the law of *karman* and do not know about its dependence on grace just make a caricature of that law. *Karman* indicates universal solidarity, but without that causality and rigidity that *karman* seemingly requires if it is separated from grace.

THE CONTRIBUTION TO DIALOGUE

Everything we have pointed out up to here leads us to the third section: the contribution of our set of problems to "intrareligious" dialogue.

We must in fact distinguish between a more or less objectivated dialogue about religious *doctrines*, generally represented by institutions, and the dialogue that is established *inside* the human heart and searches for truth and the meaning of life with the help of all those experiences and intuitions that may apply. The first is interreligious dialogue; the second is intrareligious dialogue, as I have clarified in a book of the same title.¹ Even if they cannot be fully separated, here we will preferably deal with the latter and limit ourselves to pointing out three ideas.

Is There a Christian Justice?

We already mentioned that culture and religion cannot be wholly separated. Neither can we disconnect the issue of justice from the more general set of problems surrounding ethics. The question would then be if there is something like "Christian ethics." Let us disregard this last issue in order to focus on the first one. The question of whether there is a Christian justice has two meanings, whether it is proposed from the Western or the Eastern (which we limit here to the Indic) point of view. From both perspectives, the initial answer is, obviously, affirmative. Undoubtedly, there is a Christian justice (and ethics): that which Christians practice when they behave as such.

But, subsequently, the same question is understood differently by each one of the cultures in question.

The query, seen from the West, and especially from the Christian West, is understood as an inquiry into whether there is a "specifically" Christian justice, that is, one that is differentiated and exclusively Christian. Many Christian thinkers also respond affirmatively here.

The Hindū response (and I must confess that it is also my own, and that I can even defend it as Christian) is negative. There are, certainly, many specific concepts of justice, just as, in a more general manner, there are many notions of ethics. There are also concepts of justice that perhaps can be called non-Christian because they go directly against fundamental Christian intuitions. But we should be sensitive to the contributions of the sociology of knowledge here, so as not to be overhasty in giving answers that may have to be retracted later. I believe that, nowadays, we would all agree that slavery is clearly an unjust institution, and that there cannot be a Christian justice that defends it. Nevertheless, many centuries of Christian ethics

¹ R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1999). In Volume VI.2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

did ignore this problem; in fact, many Christians, Roman pontiffs included, accepted the institution of slavery.

With this, we already suggested that it will be quite difficult to defend a posteriori that there is a specifically Christian justice. However, we can still find in recent books—from this very decade, and some of them very valuable—that “love is what is specifically Christian,” that “Christian specificity is the evangelical passion for justice,” that there is at least one “axiom revealed only in the Bible, specific only to the Christian faith and completely absent from all non-Semitic religions,” and so on. Seen from within, this seems to be true; but these and similar expressions *ad usum nostrorum* cannot be maintained outside of their context. I do not believe that there can be any human a priori that can be justified as specifically Christian. In any case, it should be a Christian a priori, which already assumes a *petitio principii*. But, even in this case, I do not see it anywhere. We have been told, and are still being told, that this is the love for God and our neighbors without distinctions and as one and the same love. Love? I sincerely doubt that Christianity or any other religion, especially seen from the outside, can claim to be the religion of love. “You will be able to tell them by their fruits” (Mt 7:20). Religion is a very complex phenomenon, and it harbors the best and the worst of human beings.

In a book I wrote in the 1960s,² I took the liberty to translate some Hindü texts written many centuries before Christ that refer to the love for one’s neighbor, including the love for one’s enemies. Here are some examples:

“Do not mistreat the other even if you are provoked by him, do not harm him, either in thought or in speech, do not pronounce words that cause pain to others.”

“Do not look down on anybody, bear false accusations patiently; do not be irritated by those who show you ire, bless whoever curses you.”

“This is the pinnacle of virtues: treat others as you would like to be treated, do not do unto your neighbor what you do not want your neighbor to do unto you. . . . [In all] one follows the just path if one always sees the other as oneself.”

“Be happy for the prosperity of others, even if you are indigent.”

“Grant hospitality even to your enemy if he asks for it. Don’t trees offer their shade even those who come to cut them down?”

“Bear insults with patience. . . . Do not respond to false accusations with damnations; do not insult he who insults you.”

All of these texts were written before the Gospels. I could also adduce testimony from other traditions, such as a Buddhist text in which Buddha reprimands some monks who have neglected an old, sick monk, and after taking care of him, he adds that they should have looked after him “as if you were taking care of me.”

In fact, there is no Christian ethical affirmation that does not exist in texts that are prior to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, is a Christian specificity necessary? Doesn’t the true strength of Christianity lie in saying that it is not specific? Isn’t Christian justice meant to be universal? Salt (Mt 5:13; Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34) does not intend to turn everything into salt, but rather to make every food taste better by disappearing into it. *Intelligenti pauca*.

I defend, besides, that we cannot adduce any a priori argument in order to prove that there is a specific and, therefore, exclusive Christian justice. This would represent a heretical conception of Christianity itself, as it would not only deny that God wants everybody to be

² *Kultmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum* (Freiburg: Alber, 1964), p. 152.

saved (1 Tim 2:4)—something that is consistent with the Christian idea of a just God who does not condemn anybody capriciously—but it would also contradict Christianity's aspiration for "catholicity." Christians could discover the importance of kenosis in the Christian Scripture (Phil 2:7) through an intrareligious dialogue with Buddhism, incidentally. Only by "emptying oneself" can one become a ferment for everything.

Contribution of Intrareligious Dialogue to the Contemporary World

I would now like to point out some contributions of this dialogue to the contemporary world.

Undoubtedly, this is one of the main problems of "Christianity and justice," insofar as Christianity claims to provide a complete justification of Man. It is incongruous that theologians and exegetes have divided the evangelical notion of *dikaioσύνη* into "justice" on the one hand (from a social, and superficial, viewpoint), and "justification" on the other (as a passport to the other world). And when, later on, the so-called liberation theology tries to reestablish their unity, some theologians will express their discontent aloud. I think it is important to point out that justification and justice cannot be separated, even though they must be distinguished, and even when human beings can attain their justification while living under an unjust regime.

Our second comment refers to the fact that, paradoxically, we can broaden and go further in depth into our notion of justice precisely by relativizing it. Intrareligious dialogue is an effective means against fanaticism (which comes from the absolutization of our own convictions) because it reveals to us that there exist other contexts that are equally respectable.

In our case, we could free the concept of justice from the claws of individualism and from a predominantly social field; and dialogue can help us to relativize the notion of *iustitia ad debitum reddere* (giving one's due), as *cuique suum* (each to his own), as *restitutio* (repaying), as *iustitia ad alterum* (justice with respect to another), and so on. Finding the homeomorphic equivalents to the notion of justice in other traditions is now an urgent task. Suffice it to point out the issue of human rights. Human rights are not universal, but we must find equivalents in other traditions that may also be able to justify the respect that is due to human dignity.

Now we must integrate the entire set of problems surrounding justice into a more complete cosmivision. This will give us that serenity that is sometimes lost when we think, for example, about the thousands of children who will die today without our being able to do anything about it. What solution will we suggest for them? What is the "we will prevail" syndrome good for—even if it can mobilize people's inertia and give them enthusiasm? We know that we cannot fix our world's inherent injustices for them, neither today nor tomorrow. We must complete our cosmology and our justice with a more complex vision, which, on the other hand, must not turn into the easy escapism of a merely eschatological response.

I will give an example to express it simply and quickly. Three people of very different mentalities once held a dialogue at a North American university: Thomas Berry, who was concerned about ecological disasters and defended that ecology should be our main priority because, according to him, we are killing life on this planet; Jon Sobrino, who felt very badly about the destruction of nature, but declared to feel more concerned and responsible for the assassinations going on in Guatemala and for whom the main priority was Man; and myself, to make matters worse, for whom prolonging the life of those poor human beings by ten, fifty, or one hundred years, and this Earth's life by few thousand years more would have no result: we must find a transtemporal dimension that is able to give meaning to the life of

the child who dies today without our being able to stop it, because human dignity without a vertical dimension makes no sense.

Have we forgotten the mystical aspect? Have we forgotten that Man wants eternity and is not satisfied with merely solving technical problems? Do I become despaired because there is injustice on this earth? There *is* injustice, and we must shout this out with our entire soul, but without thinking that everything is wrong because of it. There is something more: History is very important, but it is not all of human life; the historical dimension of Man is not the entire human being. By overcoming exteriorism, on the one hand, and interiorism, on the other, we will discover that hope does not refer to the future, but to the invisible.

These can be some of the contributions of interreligious dialogue in which we can learn from one another.

The Last Dilemma

The mystical dimension gives us peace and grants us serenity to confront problems, but it does not offer us "the solution." The third eye is essential to see reality in its full complexity, but it ceases to be "third" if it becomes the only one, or even the first one. All three eyes are necessary: the empirical, the rational, and the mystical, or the eye of faith (but we should use different terms, because the ones I have just mentioned have been so often repeated that we may discard them. I keep them provisionally and cautiously, for the sake of brevity).

I believe the last dilemma emerges from the following view: this world may possibly be *māyā*, everything may be "a bad night in a bad inn," perhaps "death solves everything," perhaps "everything happens for a good reason" . . . but in the meantime, as long as we find ourselves in this human condition, we cannot deny either pain or injustice. To relativize does not mean to deny. We must recognize that the current system is intrinsically unfair. And, nevertheless, we cannot free ourselves from it: either we remain within it, contributing to the injustice, or we marginalize ourselves, equally contributing to injustice.

This is why I believe that "Christianity and justice" touches upon a critical point that fully belongs to the essence of both. We must learn a lot from tradition, but the solutions of the past are not useful for us. The theology of original sin, the consciousness that we live in *regione dissimilitudinis*,³ the philosophy of *vyāvahārika* and the consciousness of our *avidyā*, to put it in rich traditional notions, are essential instruments to confront the problem, but they are not enough. We cannot project the solution onto another world, or flee to the mountaintops. Our era has lost that innocence that allowed it to believe in these myths, in the most profound sense. The dilemma is pressing. The system is intrinsically unfair, and it is not necessary to look for expiatory or propitiatory victims to exempt us from our responsibility by being charged with all the blame. All fault does not rest with Hitler, capitalism, original sin, or *kaliyuga*, to give some very disparate examples.

For too long this dilemma has been solved with a deadly match between those who opted for one of the two horns: either Christianity or justice. Either the other life, justification in heaven, salvation of the soul, the kingdom of heaven . . . or this life, justice in history, salvation of matter, the kingdom of earth . . . this is the dualism between the good and the bad, even if they are referred to as the rich and the poor, believers and nonbelievers, black and white people, employers and workers, left and right. . . . I think that having experienced the failure of both postures, after six thousand years of a culture of war, belongs to the *kairos* of

³ Editorial note: "In the place of dissimilarity": a phrase of the church fathers meaning, "after the fall," which spoiled God's likeness in Man.

today's humanity. What lies beyond alienates; what lies close by drives you crazy . . . Altruism kills; selfishness suffocates.

"Christianity and justice" could be a symbol (certainly not the only one) that the last dilemma consists in turning it into a "tri-lemma" that denies all duality. This is how I understand Advaita and trinity; but to clarify this now would mean having to start all over again. . . .

Suffice it to say that interreligious dialogue is here necessary, and that interculturality is nowadays a human imperative. Not only do these provide us with the ability to relativize and give us serenity, but they also grant us the strength to overcome the temptation of a mere reform. I believe that the current system can no longer be repaired. A reform would only prolong the agony of a system that is doomed to die. But neither is it a matter of "de-forming" it, saying that everything is evil, and condemning everything with a Puritanism that would lead to the opposite extreme. Violent deformation is not useful.

What is left to us is transformation—a transformation that is only possible within interculturality. Today's problem is neither political, nor economic, nor technical: it is human, it is ours, it is metaphysical, it is mystical, or whatever you wish to call it, but it is not a problem for experts or specialists. What is at stake nowadays is our humanity qua humanity, that is, insofar as a "recapitulator"⁴ of reality.

I said that justice is *dharmā*, and that *dharmā* is that which maintains the universe in a dynamic polarity. The problem of justice, both in Hinduism as well as in Christianity, is the problem of life.

⁴ See Eph 1:10 (Greek text).

Part Four

A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HINDUISM AND CHRIST

The problem of Christ and world religions is both significant and urgent. It is *significant* because the very universality of Christ is at stake in the current dialogue among the great religions of the world. The problem is *urgent* because, now that the old solutions no longer hold, we must find a new answer to the problem. We need a response that is free both from the exclusiveness that has unhappily characterized Christianity, and from the risk of watering down the meaning of the Christ-event by reducing it to a mere fact of the past. We have reached a turning point in the history of Christianity: even the Second Vatican Council has considered other religions as paths to salvation.

In the first part of this paper I wish to describe three aspects of the *confrontation with Christ by Hinduism*, and in the second part I try to show what a *confrontation with Hinduism by Christ* might suggest.

HINDUISM'S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

The Misunderstanding

The first section has this title because we cannot deny that there is a fundamental misunderstanding in the dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism—and we may assume that the responsibility falls on Christianity. All the historical exceptions only prove the rule of what *abbe* Monchanin called “the great misunderstanding.” I would like to quote a proverb known in many languages, which asks, “What is the first requirement, if you want to teach Sanskrit to Gopal?” A rationally minded person would immediately answer: the first requirement is that you know Sanskrit. The Western answer may even point out that you have a college title. But the Indic answer is quite different: it says that the first requirement is that you know Gopal.

Accordingly, the first thing needed by those who want to present the Christian message to Gopal is not so much that they know the message but that they know the people who will receive the message. We must admit that very rarely did the Christians coming from abroad know what Gopal thought or believed. What is the Hinduism like, seen from within? What is this religion, with its multifarious rites and bewildering exuberance? When we concentrate all of our attention on the message or on the messenger, and exclude the person who is to receive the message, we will probably forget that the three cannot be separated, because ultimately every being is nothing but relatedness.

I will try to describe how this misunderstanding has arisen. I am not adopting a historical perspective, but an existential one. It will only be a rough caricature of the situation. I will express myself as a Hindū in good faith who has heard about Christ, and who reacts as follows: Hinduism and Christ, that is to say, myself—a Hindū—confronted with the Christian message. My first reaction would be the typically Indian one of hospitality: I will welcome the Christ and this Christian from across the sea, who says that he comes with a message of salvation (*mokṣa*). I will try to integrate this Christ into my pantheon, receive him with an open heart, try to understand his message—and even to worship him. All this is no problem to me. I will give Christ a place of honor. I would be moved by the Sermon of the Mount, also by the events that took place at Gethsemane, and perhaps even fall in love with the whole story of his life being told by these messengers who speak of a Savior and of universal love. But I still remain a Hindū living in the context of at least forty centuries of deep-rooted pluralism—and it now appears that this Christ whom I was ready to worship, whom I even consider as the Son of God, this Christ whom I have accepted, wants to dominate. He tells me that I must reject all other Gods. “You have accepted me,” he seems to say, “and now you must allow me to take the place of all your other Gods. I am more than your *iṣṭadevatā* [chosen deity]. You must believe that all the prophets who came before or even after me were only paving the way to me. They must disappear, and

I must be the One. I will accept your hospitality by telling you to break your idols, leave everything else behind, and follow me."

This is the misunderstanding, summarized in an extreme and oversimplified form. I know that the first Christian reaction will be to tell me that all this is not exactly true, that Christ brings peace, and so on. But this does not alter the facts: my reaction as a Hindū is as sincere and as common as the Christian one. This only amounts to proving that there is a fundamental mistake somewhere in the transmission of the message: the messenger may have failed to discover who Gopal is. The misunderstanding arises when a messenger, in all good faith, brings a message claiming to be universal, but which appears sectarian, biased, and intolerable to the person who listens to it.

The Meeting Is Ambiguous from the Start

Three elements characterize this ambiguity:

a. *An element of rejection.* A Christian believer would say that Christ is a "stumbling block,"¹ that he came to overturn everything. Christ seems to demand a conversion amounting to death, and thus he incurs rejection. He can be refused out of a suspicion that he will overturn everything. This is hard to accept, and it would imply too radical a change. It is in this way that Christ truly becomes a "sign of contradiction."² Meeting Christ means an encounter with death and resurrection.

b. *An element of scandal.* Christ may come to overturn everything, but Christians come to disturb. There is an essential difference. They bring disturbance either through external means or through their culture. They don't seem to preach Christ, but Christianity. We can here quote Gandhi, who said of Christians what Christ said of the Pharisees (Mt 23:3): "Observe whatever they tell you, but do not do what they do; for they preach but do not."

The book of Genesis tells us that Man was created a vegetarian,³ but he has not remained so. The New Testament preaches nonviolence, but we cannot forget everything that has happened since in Christian history. Christ himself tells us to love our enemies, but we seldom see Christians doing so. . . .

The argument that we should not judge Christianity on the basis of the unworthiness of certain of its members is not valid, since one finds the same contrast between Hinduism, which demands a deep commitment to spiritual values along with a life of absolute purity, and the degeneration of certain Hindūs. The *Bhagavad-gītā* contains as sublime a doctrine as that of the Gospels, but this type of academic comparison is irrelevant when it comes to an existential confrontation between the two religions. The Gospel tells us to love our enemies, and the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (II.161ff.; VI.47–48) says, "Do not hate anyone; tolerate calumnies; bless those who do harm to you." And the *Mahābhārata* (XII.5528) adds, "Do you not see that the tree even shelters the man who will cut it down?" The argument, then, is not valid, because it is not two doctrines that we are comparing. Christianity maintains to be a historical religion, an incarnate power. Therefore, to say, "We Christians are poor sinners, but we preach a marvelous doctrine" is simply unacceptable in India—or elsewhere.

c. *An element of attraction.* Another element—besides those of rejection and scandal—is to be found in this confrontation: an element of attraction. In India, Christ exerts a great charm and attraction. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth

¹ See Mt 21:42–44.

² Lk 2:33.

³ Gen 1:29.

centuries, India, and especially Bengal, discovered the story of this Christ who is alive everywhere. Certain neo-Hindū movements were born out of his radiant image. There are Indian *gurus* of great and profound spirituality who told me, "The final stage in spiritual evolution is the discovery of Christ." They realize that Christ is the most sublime epiphany that has ever existed on earth.

Yet these people never dreamed of becoming Christians or joining any church or Christian organization, not only because there are many different Christian churches and sects but because they realize that the Christ they love is beyond everything, even beyond the church that calls itself Christian. They speak of a "Christ consciousness," which Jesus expressed when he said, "I and the Father are One" (Jn 10:30).

In trying to sort out the various elements underlying this attraction, I should also mention another factor, more mystical in nature, of the order of grace. But I will leave this aside since we cannot know what goes on in the depths of the soul, or in the heart of different religions, cultures, and civilizations.

The strong attraction that Christ exerts on Hindūs can be summed up under the following three headings.

A Suffering God

In many Hindū homes one can see an image of Christ: the most popular is that of Christ kneeling in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Hinduism often attempts to go beyond the great scandal of pain and suffering by denying the very reality of this pain and suffering. In Christianity, pain and suffering have entered into the very heart of this God who came down to earth. (India has no difficulty in admitting that Jesus is God, but perhaps, in the sense meant by Hindūs, that might not be acceptable to traditional Christians.) Hindūs see that Christianity has the courage to admit the existence of suffering, and even to give it a place in the life of the man they consider as the Savior. Hindūs find this insight immensely attractive, they are moved to see Christians admitting the idea of a suffering God while continuing to recognize him as God. To be sure, some Hindū divinities also struggle, but they are not defeated and condemned like Christ.

A Divine Man

I say "Man" because India has always been in danger of falling into what Westerners would call "angelicism" or even "divinism." The more a *guru* or spiritual master abstains from food and laughter, the more he rises above the human condition and the accidents of life, the more he is considered a true master, a superior being. Both traditional and modern India are greatly fascinated by the image of a divine Man who laughs, who eats, who is no ascetic (for Christ is no ascetic according to Indian standards), who is truly a Man and does not deny his humanity. Kṛṣṇa often elicits this same sympathy, but he was a *God*, not a divine Man.

A Human God

What surprises Indians is a God who is not mythological, but who is a historical God, a God involved in the life of humankind, who lives that life in all simplicity. Hinduism has always had an intuitive knowledge of the mysterious union between the Human and the divine.

These are three elements that make Christ extraordinarily attractive. Combining them with the elements of rejection and scandal, we can reach an overall view of the encounter between Hinduism and Christ.

Let me sum up the attitude of Hinduism confronted with Christ: Hindūs will accept him, love him, try to integrate him, assimilate him, and even to become his disciples, but they will not admit his intolerance of all others, his exclusiveness. Whether right or wrong, this is what a Hindū thinks and says. It is interesting to note that the oft-repeated formula concerning Christian absolutism is Hegelian in its origin: *Absolutheitsanspruch* (claim to absoluteness), which to Hindūs appears either ridiculous or sectarian. To put it simply, Hinduism would like to embrace Christ, but would not want to be stifled by him. Thus there is a misunderstanding, an ambiguity, in the encounter. The very fact that a Christian may not accept this point of view proves, once again, that the whole problem must be rethought.

Now, in the second part, I would like to reverse the issue and speak of Christ vis-à-vis Hinduism.

CHRIST'S ENCOUNTER WITH HINDUISM

Invariably Christ demands a reversal and total conversion, and therefore a change in the very way of posing the problem: just as we speak of Hinduism's encounter with Christ, shouldn't we also speak of Christ's encounter with Hinduism? I am now going to speak as a man impelled by a living faith in Christ, about the essential reality of a true, historical, and sacramental Christ.

Extrapolation

No law in physics is valid outside the interval for which it is formulated, and beyond which one must be careful not to extrapolate unduly. Christian theologians *did* often extrapolate. I can explain what I mean by way of an example. If we open the Gospel, we especially find cosmological examples. Everyone admits, for starters, that when Matthew says that the shadows covered the earth at the death of Christ (Mt 27:45), this does not mean that the shadows actually extended up to Patagonia. When we are told that the flood covered the whole earth (Gen 7:18ff.), no one today would take this literally.

If we do this in cosmology, we should do the same when we think of a nation's culture or anthropology. I fear Christians have not yet thought out or lived Christianity in an extra-Mediterranean religious and cultural context. When St. Paul, for example, criticized the Gentiles of his time, he was not thinking of Buddhists, Hindūs, Muslims, and so on, and it would be an unjustifiable extrapolation to include them. The truth is just the contrary: in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, slave nor barbarian.¹

This suggests to us that *religious pluralism* may be justified from the Christian point of view, but this is a question that must be reserved for a Vatican Council III or Jerusalem II. Philosophical and theological pluralism are now generally accepted. No one is obliged to adhere to a given philosophical or theological system in order to profess the Christian faith. Nor is it necessary to belong to any specific cultural system in order to be a Christian. But Christians have not sufficiently thought out and developed the justification of religious pluralism, which would be to admit that other religions have their unique place in the Christian economy of salvation.

Christ's encounter with Hinduism: first of all, we must examine this phenomenon of extrapolation and ask ourselves whether the usual views on Hinduism are not, in fact, a gratuitous extrapolation of statements to be found in the Old and New Testaments. For instance, it is a gross extrapolation to say that the anathemas of Isaiah, the Psalmist, or the New Testament apply to what is called "idolatry" in India. Such anathemas cannot be applied to realities other than those against which the sacred writers directed them.

¹ See Gal 3:28.

The Specifically Christian Characteristics of the Act of Faith

What are the characteristics of the act of faith? Let us take the passage in Matthew 16:13 in which Jesus asks his disciples, "Who is the Son of Man?" and Peter gives his famous reply: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In the context of Peter and of Israel, this reply constitutes the Christian act of faith. Yet a simple linguistic analysis will show the reply to be completely unintelligible or distorted in a context different from what we might call the "Judeo-Christian" one. The Messiah is he who has been longed for, hoped for, awaited. But India has never waited for anyone, and has never known about Israel's hope. It means nothing to India that Christ is the Messiah. If you tell this to Hindus, they will accept him in the way I sketched at the beginning: "Here is Christ, the Savior; let us accept him," but it will be *their* Christ, *their* Savior. "We have been left outside this particular program of salvation, but we are ready to accept him because we realize that there are other religions and other prophets beyond our *dharmā*."

For the message to be intelligible, we must first try to find out what the predicate of the sentence is: "I come to announce the Messiah," "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." All these and similar sentences have a completely different meaning in India. Each generation must try to find the predicate of the sentence that makes the act of faith specifically Christian. Christ's question, "Who am I?" demands an existential reply. If we answer with a formula, then we must discover a formula that may be valid in a certain context. If we transplant it, it does lose its vitality, and we are paving the way to a misunderstanding. The answer of Peter, who gained the blessings of Jesus, did not consist in saying the words, "Messiah, Son of the living God," which Jesus himself forbade him to tell anybody, but in saying "you," that is, the discovery of the person, the living encounter. The subject of the sentence, not the predicate: *tat tvam asi*, to have discovered the *tvam*, the *you*. St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans (10:20) quotes a verse from Isaiah: "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." Here the accent is not on the Messiah. We will have to reconsider the whole of Christology.

It seems to me that there are three stages in the process of Christian faith: (a) Christ *in* Israel, before his death. Here the exclusiveness of Jesus within the frontiers of the "chosen people" cannot be denied. (b) A second stage during which Christ, after his death, acts *through* Israel. This is the present stage of Christianity. (c) Perhaps we should now begin to think of a faith in Christ not only through Israel, but *apart* from Israel, through any other authentic religion.

An almost identical dialectic (for want of a better word) can be found in the history of the councils of the Christian church. Beginning with the Council of Jerusalem, the issue at stake has always been the same. Let us read the Acts of the Apostles (15:1): "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." In the same way, we still insist on saying that if "you" do not accept certain rites, doctrines, customs, philosophy, culture, and way of thinking and living, you cannot be a Christian. The answer has never varied from the Apostles' Council to Vatican II. On the one hand, there are certain concessions: it is no longer necessary to be circumcised, to adhere to a given formula, and so on; on the other hand—let us call it a compromise—tradition must be respected, one must not break too quickly with the past, things must be done step by step. A tension always remains.

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," says Peter. In order to tackle the problem of Christ's encounter with Hinduism, I must discover who this Christ is. When you talk about a Messiah, this means very little to me. I hear you speak of the Son of God, but, for us

Hindūs, we all are children of God, so that does not impress us. In order to find an answer to this urgent and burning question, we have to see who this Christ is, who comes and meets Hinduism face-to-face: a living Christ; a Christ who was in the Beginning before Abraham; who is the Creator, Alpha and Omega, the Only Son, and also the Firstborn of all creatures. I would like to follow the Council of Chalcedon and play with four adjectives: this Christ is *present*, *active*, *unknown*, and *hidden* within Hinduism. The same Christ who lives and acts in the Hindū is the one whom the Christian recognizes in Jesus of Nazareth.

If I can discover this Christ hidden within Hinduism, then Christian faith will be intelligible to me. This present, active, unknown, and hidden Christ may be called Īśvara, Bhagavān, or even Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, or Śiva. The Christian who wishes to be understood by a Hindū must be able to declare, with all the necessary qualifications, that Bhagavān or Īśvara are symbols of the Christ made manifest in Jesus of Nazareth. It is only by finding the predicate of the specifically Christian act of faith that it can be made understandable. When this happens, Christ will become a true sign of contradiction; and the sort of too easy understanding I mentioned before ("I first accept you, and then I am scandalized because you want to change everything") will no longer arise.

The Challenge

Hinduism is challenged to "come down to earth," or rather into history; Christianity is challenged to rise a little higher. The Christ who confronts Hinduism is the same who confronts Christianity. There are not two Christs; Christ is all in all, and the monopoly of no one. Unless Christians are satisfied with belonging to a sect that has been existing in a small corner of the earth for twenty centuries, which is a short period of time, we must admit that the Christ who confronts Hinduism is the very same Christ who confronts Christianity.

Christ is trans-historic as well as historic. To destroy the historical factor is to rescind Christ, but reducing him to historicity is to destroy him. This challenge is important, since to say that Christianity is a mere historical fact would mean to destroy it; but, on the other hand, to say that Christianity can do without history would mean to destroy it as well. Christ is the *Epiphany*, the real manifestation, in history, of the Mystery hidden since the beginning of time (cf. Rom 16:25; Col 1:26). But the historical order is not all that there was at the beginning, nor all that there will be at the end. India understands this very well.

The Christ that confronts Hinduism presents himself as its death and resurrection. Christ's encounter with Hinduism means death, but this death is the conversion and resurrection through which it will reach its plenitude. But this is also the case with Christianity. To avoid any misunderstanding, I must immediately add that Christ's challenge to Hinduism is not to adopt the sociological form into which Christianity has crystallized, but to become a converted Hinduism, a transformed one. Conversion is not alienation, but a passage into a new life, that continues and fulfills the former life. The real challenge is not about a confrontation between one sociological religion and another, but Hindūs, Christians, and others being confronted by Christ and transformed by Him.

Here is the dialectic of death and resurrection. Christians must follow their Master, and love their neighbors with a love that gives life and brings death. But we know² that love has always been stronger than death.

² See Song 8:6-7.

Part Five

EKKLÊSIA AND *MANDIRAM*,
TWO SYMBOLS OF HUMAN SPIRITUALITY

OUR SITUATION

A deeper reading than just a political interpretation of the crumbling of the socialist parties of Eastern Europe gives us a signal that the time of the sovereign nation-states is beginning to be obsolete. Could we not also read these momentous events as a manifestation of a *Zeitgeist*¹ that indicates that the understanding of religions as separate constituencies begins to become equally out of tune with the deepest concerns of what religions themselves claim to represent?

Religious traditions have always produced their own philosophical (or theological) interpretations, and from their own perspectives they have also criticized the religious views of neighboring countries carried, by and large, by armies and peoples set up on expanding themselves—to put it mildly. The religion of the neighbor generally appears as a threat.

Both the intermingling of peoples today and their mobility have converted the theoretical ideal of a few into a practical challenge for many. The theoretical ideal was that religions have to meet, dialogue, and nobly emulate each other. The practical challenge is that, if we do not change, we are going to destroy each other, although the pretext will not be the Trinity or *wu-wei* but the different political, ecological, and economic interests of one group over another.

In a word, the approach to comparative religion is no longer an elitist affair nor an exclusively academic or “ecclesiastical” concern. It is a matter of world peace and planetary survival. It represents a shallow interpretation of the human condition to reduce its causes to a failure in the technological know-how in distributing economic goods (and goodies). The problem is not between two ideologies of similar technocratic nature: socialism versus capitalism. The problem is anthropological, and ultimately religious. But religions, as institutionalized bulwarks of merely doctrinal orthodoxies, are part of the problem and seem even to add fuel to human divisions—as many fundamentalist revivalisms indicate. And yet Man is unavoidably religious, *Homo religiosus*.

A word that tries discreetly to meet the challenge of religious apartheid is “spirituality.” *Dharma* may eventually be a better name, but this is not my point now. My point is the need for an authentic religiousness that is, at the same time, communitarian and not sectarian.

By “communitarian” I mean that religion, in the deepest sense of the word, is not an individualistic affair. You do not concoct your own religion as you may mix your own cocktail. Even if one were to fall into that temptation, one would follow one’s own culture still more blindly than one obeys the latest fashion in mixing drinks. Man is by nature a cultural and a social animal, and “animal” here does not stand for a classificatory notion but for an *animated* being, a living entity. Here is where religious traditions remain indispensable institutions, somewhat necessary, but certainly not sufficient.

¹ In German: spirit of the time.

By "nonsectarian" I mean that human religiousness is not an isolated affair of a closed system. Today we can no longer be satisfied with merely belonging to closed religious groupings, even if they have a glorious past. We are not social "monads without windows."² This is not a blanket criticism of the past, but a critical warning for the present. The once "holy doors" of many religions have become obsolete, to say the least, and certainly ineffective. They cannot prevent the *winds of the spirit* (if you allow me to use a redundancy) from blowing without frontiers. A true brahman is not so by birth, nor is an authentic Christian, for that matter. The Spirit makes everything new and does not make discrimination of persons; the *puruṣa* is thousand-headed, the sun shines for all, just to echo expressions from the two traditions under study.

Can we trespass the frontiers of the millenarian religions without becoming uprooted? Can we create a personal religiousness that is not the fruit of a syncretistic whim? Can we forge an identity open to the future for us, without betraying the past? This is the challenge.

² Citing an expression from Leibniz.

THE HINDŪ AND THE CHRISTIAN QUEST

I would like to introduce a single aspect of this huge problematic with the help of three double symbols.

The Two Temples and the One People

One of the Sanskrit words for the Hindū temple is *mandiram*, which means dwelling place, house, palace, up to town, on the one hand, and stable (*mandurā*, in Greek *mandra*, which could also mean monastery; cf. Archimandrite) on the other. The temple is the house of the God, the dwelling place of the divine, the divine enclosure, as the Greek *temenos* signifies. The divine is everywhere: *iśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*, "This whole [universe] is enveloped by God" (JU 1). But we mortals can greatly profit from a tangible place where the divine is more easily accessible. The religion that insists so much on the universal divine immanence has built the most magnificent temples to house the Gods within *gopuram* and *garbha-grha*!

One of the Greek words for the Christian temple is *ekklesia*, which means a summoned assembly, a congregation called from the outside. The verb *kaleo* means to call, to name, and *kleiō*, to make famous, known (cf. Latin *clamor*, *clarus*). The temple is the congregation, the people duly assembled by the divine calling. Thus another word is "church," from the Greek *kyriakos*, that is, belonging to the *Kyrios*, the Lord who calls the people. The Lord inhabits in an inaccessible light;¹ Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, "Nobody has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18). The religion that insists so much on divine transcendence has built the most magnificent cathedrals to house the people.

We have here two complementary attitudes. First, within the respective traditions, the Hindū temple is a house of God, the Christian temple is a house of Man. The prevalently immanent Hindū Godhead wants a place for the Gods. The prevalently Christian transcendent Godhead wants a place for the People. Second, the two attitudes complement each other. And so, from either side we hear that the true temples of the divine are our bodies, ultimately because the material temple is only a symbol.

This is not a plea for erasing all temples. I am pleading for the deeper realization that *ekklesia* and *mandiram* are built for the people to meet God, and for the Gods to meet the people, and that there is but one People, the human family, and one Godhead, the divine household. We can neither excommunicate ourselves nor the divine from reality. We are intrinsically related to one another and to the cosmos as the third "dimension" of the universe—which is the cosmotheandric intuition.

This is neither advocating that we should mix all in one single religion, nor favoring religious or spiritual solipsism. I am defending that authentic human communication

¹ 1 Tim 6:16.

always has to be a *communicatio in sacris*, a religious fellowship, a more or less explicit sharing of our experiences of the ultimate mystery of Life and Reality. I am propounding the mutual fecundation between religious traditions in the deepest recesses of the human being. I am suggesting that, without love, such a fecundation would be monstrous, and that with love we run the "risk" of a new child, the continuation of religious life in forms until now unforeseen.

"Enlightened" Christians say that the church is not the building, and "educated" Hindūs similarly repeat that temple worship is the lowest form of religion. Whatever this may be, symbols should speak for themselves, and I will here stress the very symbolism of the building in both cases.

In a word, living spiritualities are always concrete, embodied, alive in the houses of Gods and Men. These two symbols of *ekklesia* and *mandiram* express, further, the fact that spiritualities are not to be confused with mere doctrines or just rituals. Neither Christianity nor Hinduism are just "temples," material temples. But without the reality of this symbol, they may simply become ideologies. A temple is material, a temple delimits a space and encompasses a time, it gathers people, bodies, and somehow it also harbors the divine.

A temple is a meeting place. It can easily be discovered, and destroyed. A temple shares in the human vulnerability. When Paul speaks of us as temples of the Holy Spirit, he refers explicitly to our bodies, not just our minds (1 Cor 6:19). The *lingam* is in the *garbha-grha* and, even if it happened to be sheer emptiness, it would still have to be "located" there. The invisible *prakṛti* is always accompanied by the visible *vikṛti* by which the Supreme Spirit pervades the universe, says the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (III.46.3).

But there is still more. Spirituality is involvement, action, praxis. The temple is there to do something, even if it were only to attract or to repel us. It is not neutral.

Trimārga and Homo Viator

Whatever the differences between those two rich sheaves of spiritualities and religions that we gather under the names of Hinduism and Christianity, both speak of a pilgrimage, the following of a way, the path toward perfection, realization, salvation, liberation, fulfillment, divinization—not to use Sanskrit names. All the ways may lead to the peak, although we may disagree about the height, nature, and even real existence of the peak. Only one method (*bodas*, path), one *sādhana* (discipline), will not do. Nor would discussing at cross-purposes along the way, or perhaps crossing frivolously from one path to another, because it is easier to give up climbing our respective trails and go on tasting the offerings of religious propagandists, whether they show up as *gurus* or missionaries.

Anyone familiar with Christian spirituality knows the basic conviction of the Abrahamic traditions depicting Man (like Śaṅkarācārya, incidentally) as a pilgrim toward the promised land. There is little point in *merely* discussing the nature of the ways. Or rather, the way is way only if we do transit on it, like the song is a song only when it is sung. If we are attentive to our *sādhana*, we may exchange experiences, but we will hardly engage in merely doctrinal discussions—important as they are in their proper place. "Caminante, no hay camino," says Antonio Machado, "se hace camino al andar" (Wayfarer, there is no way: the way is in the going). We can only understand we are all pilgrims on the way, even the *jīvan-mukta* (realized soul) as long as the body persists.

What brings us together is not the fact that we agree or we all march on the same "high-way," but that we go, we do not get stuck, not even in our ideas, we remain seekers, *viatores*, although not exactly knowing toward which *tīrthas* (shrines) and which *kṣetras* (sacred

grounds) we are going. In a word, an authentic spirituality is always dynamic, it is a *mārga* (way), a *sādhana* (discipline), praxis with an inbuilt theory that makes it open to change, to *metanoia* (transformation).

Upāyānupāya: "Ya por aquí no (h)ay camino"

This is not the place for a mystical flight, as much as I may be tempted to describe it. It is only the occasion to underscore that, when we speak of our own personal experiences, we reach a deeper and more fruitful level than when we refer to mere doctrinal expositions—needed as they are, for without intellectual effort and serious scholarship, the rest remains superficial. The mystical insight is not everything, but without it, the meeting of spiritualities is incomplete and often deformed. The meeting of spiritualities is neither a comparison of doctrines nor an exchange of experiences. It comprises both, but cannot be reduced to either. Only if I have a personal experience will I be able to handle dogmas and doctrines with the freedom of a true believer. Only if I have the required doctrinal knowledge will I be able to grasp the meaning of my own experience, and the similarities and differences with the others'.

But I am prompted to say a different thing, citing Abhinavagupta and St. John of the Cross. Both tell us, to cite from St. John of the Cross: "y en el Monte nada": on the top, nothing; on the mountain, nothingness. There is no way: the *upāya*, the means, is an *anupāya*, a no-means. The way, ultimately, may become the obstacle. There can be no intermediary. We have to become ourselves the mediators, the integrated beings, the realized persons, the *jīvanmuktas*, the *comprehensores*, having realized ourselves the *abam-brahman*, the *ātman-brahman*.

What I try to say is simpler: today, and not only on the heights of spiritual life but also on the plains of religious existence, there are no trodden paths any longer. Technocratic floods and modernistic landslides have covered many of the traditional ways. Putting it differently, the spirituality for our times is not a mere rehearsal of old schemes—important as they are, and necessary as it is that we know in depth our respective traditions. Tradition *did* shape our wings, but in order to fly we have to open and move our own wings, and follow the winds of the Spirit (repeating the redundancy). What I am saying is that our situation is new, and that spirituality is not just archaeology or comparative religion, for that matter. The synthesis has to be *personal*, and thus humble, but not *individual*. It has to be spontaneous, as a manifestation of our whole being and not as a result of our will alone. It has to be a revelation of the mystery of freedom, and not a collage of exotic, though well-intentioned, and even perhaps colorful elements. It has to be real and, thus, adapted to our present-day situation, even allowing for diachronic factors in different cultures. Anybody living in the technocratic complex of our times knows of the inundations of traditional valleys. No dams will do. We need to allow the rivers to flow.

There are no ways on the peaks of spiritual life, but there are no paths either to lead us to the true encounter of spiritualities today. There are no models. It is not a paradigm shift that is here required, because we cannot begin by assuming that what we believe the Spirit is inspiring us to do and *be* is a paradigm for ourselves, let alone for others. The truly spiritual life is a risky one. There is no model to follow. There is no prophet to listen to either, because, if there were one, the first thing that the authentic *ācārya* would tell us is, "Don't call me good,"² "Don't imitate me," "Follow yourself" (or rather, your Self).

In a word, the task of contributing to a spirituality for our times is a *formidable* (in all senses of the word) task. We know only this much. We owe fidelity to our own traditions,

² See Lk 18:19.

and precisely this fidelity obliges us to overcome the very traditions that have nurtured us—as the word “tradition” suggests: we have to pass it on, and thus transform it. We enter into a no-man’s land, and for this very reason we have to lay down all our intellectual and spiritual weapons in order to meet the other, who from the other end enters into this no-man’s land, which by this very fact becomes truly a Land of Man.

Part Six

THE DISTORTED FACE OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA— GOD OF THE POOR AND THE POOR OF GOD*

"Americans are materialists. Every American owns a car. By contrast, we are spiritual. Though we obviously each have a burning desire to own a car!" An ironic statement, even more bitter as it in fact characterizes modern India for the most part.

The circumstances are certainly much more complicated in reality, and it would be disingenuous to wish to simplify them too much. That the West is materialistic—if that is true at all—is not grounded in its wealth. Just as little does India appear to be spiritual merely because it is poor. But one can make a virtue of necessity, a virtue even greater, the more indispensable it is to life. For India, spirituality is not a luxury. It is a part or at least a condition of its existence, even of its material existence. The character of India's spirituality is connected to an economic arrangement that the West derogatorily calls misery, but that instead is really more a matter of simplicity and the elimination of superfluity.

Yet right here, the actual problem arises. To *gain one's soul*, as is written in the Gospel, almost everything else is superfluous. The means of salvation are given to everyone, even more abundantly than the air we breathe. Are such means not also in principle far more essential? To build up the world, on the other hand, nothing is superfluous in practice. Everything is required for its construction; otherwise, one would not be constructing *this* world. Nevertheless, say the Hindūs, nothing seems so superfluous as working on the construction of the world. Lao-tse, the old Chinese sage, thought exactly the same.

To diminish the tension between these two attitudes that strictly contradict each other would lead nowhere. One direction of Hinduism undoubtedly tends to do this as it succumbs to the world's "temptation." A certain compromising Christianity calling itself humanistic has tried this and still tries. But who could ever serve two masters?

* Original edition: "Das verzerrte Gesicht der Kirche in Indien," in R. Panikkar, *Kerygma und Indien* (Hamburg: Reich, 1967), pp. 19–27. Translated from German by Horace Joffrey.

All religions, one way or another, wish to lead humans to salvation. India, however, has a rather demanding conception of this salvation—at least in the judgment of the West. In India, salvation is neither the completion nor the fulfillment of humanity. It is never an enrichment of *our* being. If it is liberation, this can only be so in an utterly peculiar sense: certainly no freedom *for* . . . (to do what? In such a case, one would be still bound to do something), rather a liberation from all obstacles and restrictions. Only total liberation from every contingency and every conditionality can be the boundless aim of human striving.

One does not attain this final accomplishment through addition (of abilities, knowledge, virtues, and so on), even less through accumulation (of credits, wealth, and similar things). One reaches it only as one detaches oneself from everything, leaves everything behind. Isn't everything that one owns in this world already in itself restriction and imperfection? Yet this detachment is certainly not renunciation. A Hindū never renounces anything. Renunciation presupposes that one recognizes a certain value in whatever one gives up. As long as he deems something valuable, a Hindū would never even come close to the thought of giving it up. Rather, when he has risen to a higher level, it happens that things do not attract him anymore. He then recognizes the emptiness of what he had yet valued as a good. He clings to it no longer but lets it go, like a snake shedding its skin as soon as a new one has grown. One does not renounce. One liberates oneself, and one liberates oneself from everything. A Hindū does not strive to change the world but to transform himself. He does not aspire to create something that does not yet exist, but to discover what does exist. He does not burden himself with the weight of the world, but rather unburdens himself of every load.

Little wonder, then, that at least one place in the Gospel strikes him at his heart's core: "Blessed are the poor! Blessed are they who mourn! Blessed are they who hunger and find no comfort in the world!"

He recognizes there the selfsame spirit from which the purest of his holy traditions originated.

Christianity, by contrast, presents a totally different side of itself to him in its historical reality and social construction. To deny this would merely confuse the issue unnecessarily and give an impression of arrogance or dishonesty. One might explain it, if one can, but one should be forthright enough to admit the facts. The God of the poor in the Gospel is among the rich. The poor of God—even those of the Gospel ("You have done this unto me"²)—find themselves on the other shore.

. . .

Between India and the church exists a fundamental, chronic, yes, almost tragic misunderstanding. That is precisely the reason for past and present difficulties. Hinduism and Christianity have hardly ever met each other, not in the depth and not in reality, for there is indeed no truthful encounter where conquest, fear, or dominance reign, there where love is finally lacking. Only love yields that equality essential for every truthful encounter. Even the strictest Thomism considers love, not knowledge, the highest unifying power. Only if God loves us and we love Him in turn do we enter into communion with Him in the equality that love realizes. The sign of genuine encounter is the embrace, not proximity. Tolerance is insufficient. Not even coexistence and mutual respect suffice. Love is necessary.

We love the Hindūs, some say, but not Hinduism. Incidentally, that goes both ways: many Hindūs love Christians, but a Hindū will nevertheless despise Christianity. But does one really love a child if one boxes the mother's ears after embracing the child?

² Mt 25:31ff.

The church should bear witness to Christ and fulfill its mission on the basis of four fundamental characteristics. But unfortunately, what India has mainly seen, experienced, and suffered are generally distortions, if not caricatures, of the *unity*, *apostolicity*, *holiness*, and *catholicity* intended for the church. For now, we can only hint at what is intended. To illustrate more fully would lead too far. The entire problem follows from the misunderstandings noted above. There are explanations, even justifications for these, we do not deny it, but once again, we want nothing more than to secure the facts.

* * *

1. The church *seems* (we stress this word emphatically once and for all) tightly *bound to a certain mentality*. It is the mentality of the Mediterranean lands composed of Jewish, Hellenistic, Latin, Celtic, Gothic, and modern elements. One can just as well say that it is essentially rational; we will not say rationalistic. Open some textbook or other on theology. Aside from a small circle of initiates, who would be able to understand a single thing within it? One far more likely runs the potential risk of understanding something in a completely different sense than the author intended. It simply cannot be otherwise. Every formulation depends on a system of references and particular categories. The error consists in attempting to identify the Christian Mystery with some expression present in one of these particular reference systems. And this identification is almost invariably foreign to the corrective reach of any theological or religious pluralism, in the exact sense of this word.

For example, what has one not made out of the *logos* of St. John, which is *verbum entis* (word of being) before it becomes *verbum mentis* (word of the mind)—equally sound and sense, image and expression, as much container as content, and so on? Many African languages, for instance, have no adequate words to translate the concepts of *nature* and *person*, which are entirely foreign to the consciousness of the corresponding peoples. This fact is not necessarily a problem for Christian proclamation, but could perhaps lead to an enrichment and renewal of Christianity's central dogma for the theology of tomorrow.

In India, the problem is even more exciting. There are not merely two, but at least half a dozen categories that, it seems to us, would be capable of presenting the mystery of the Trinity far more precisely, or at least in new, complementary dimensions. Perhaps overcoming the Greek-Latin tension of nature and person would be possible from the perspective of an Indic way of thinking. If human beings and the church are pilgrims, it is certainly unsurprising that theology is equally provisional and that even dogmas are constantly on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Can one not assume that a genuine encounter of theology, that is, the church, with Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, for example—to maintain the old parallel—is of just as much significance as the church's "discovery" of Plato in the first centuries and that of Aristotle in the Middle Ages? Incidentally, replacing one theology with a different one, or putting a new one next to the old ones is not even the most important thing. What one must strive for above all is the original unity of the church in the Holy Spirit, its sole foundation; one should not insist on the purely human, "natural" behavior, regardless of whether one is concerned with historical-dogmatic, theological, or administrative arrangements.

The *unity* of the church is first and foremost a mystery. It is something completely different than the cohesion of a monolithic block or a tight organization. It comes directly from the unity of God. The church's unity is no more of a quantitative nature than is God's unity. There is no number in the Trinity, neither the *one* nor the *three* with which we attempt to present the mystery. It is simply not the case, as it is sometimes said, that the church has a soul more encompassing than its body. It is much more the case that its body has far more energetic limbs than one commonly thinks. The unity of the church consists far more in the order of

liturgical *orthopraxis* (an ontic distinction, note well, not an ethical one) than in the order of doctrinal orthodoxy—which has only too often limited the *doxa*, glory, magnificence, splendor, and beauty merely to doctrine or right opinion. According to Aristotle, a human being is first of all an *animal* in terms of genus before he is counted to a more specifically defined kind of genus that—accidentally, as it were—is *rational*. By analogy, teaching presents itself as an essential dimension of Christianity, but its original values lie much deeper.

2. The church furthermore seems *to belong to a specific social order*. One could call this structure colonial (I do not say colonialist) and bourgeois. The contemporary life of the church—in India as elsewhere—in fact shows solidarity with a quite specific culture. In its fate as well as in its structure, the church is closely bound to European civilization. Its liturgy is connected to the framework of this part of the world, adjusted to its climate and seasons. One need only observe Christian architecture and art to spare oneself any need for commentary. One thinks of the thoroughly Western character of the Christian festivals, of the “matter” of the sacraments, of the significance obtained by the four cardinal virtues in Christian anthropology, or of the row over Teilhard de Chardin because he dared touch, perhaps not upon Christ or Man, but upon the cosmological preconditions of both.

Aren't we also told that a certain living standard is necessary for being a Christian, thereby making grace dependent upon nature? Isn't St. Thomas cited as proving that one first must fill the belly, only afterward the head and the heart? Doesn't one also speak of the civilizing function of the church, irrespective of Pius X's admonition, of which the Primate of Belgium reminded the Council: insofar as the church evangelizes, it civilizes; but it does not evangelize by means of civilizing? Could there be no “wild,” “primitive” Christianity, or at least a Christian faith lived under sociological conditions distinct from those with which Christianity today is in fact so tightly bound? Does the church not have the appearance—I speak from India—of often being ready to transform itself into one of the UN's many helpful organizations?

We have no intention of rendering any value judgment. We wish only to determine to what extent the church—outside the cultural environment of the West—has taken root in foreign lands; and on the other hand, to what degree it is at home within a certain worldview and form of civilization (though the church never ceases to appear as a very limited piece of world history and geography in spatiotemporal terms). One grasps very well the joyous and relieved reaction of the missionary and even more of those who have long lived away from their homeland, when one suddenly addresses them in their mother tongue. . . . Does one not at times have the same impression when one speaks to the church in *its* language, namely, Roman, Latin, Western . . . ?

Undoubtedly, the church is *apostolic*, thus also concrete, and historically rooted. The true Christian incarnation, which is a humane, feminine, ultimately Marian mystery, did not first begin only two thousand years ago. It was set in process when human beings appeared in the world, or even before that, when the arrival of human beings was being prepared. It presupposes the fruitful action of the divine and therefore universal Spirit, which also allowed the Firstborn of creation to appear in the fullness of time as the complete and ultimate epiphany of the Son of Man.

3. The countenance of the church—even in India—exhibits *foreign traits*. One first notices this in observing its methods, although this first point concerns rather the moral or social realm than the truly religious one. But the same can also be said about the spirit and its forms of expression. For example, take the language, the way of thinking, the culture, and

the values that one emphasizes, among other things. Think also of the social, educational, and charitable establishments, which, one could say, are all two-edged swords. Is one never made aware that all of the difficulties of a spiritual kind derive above all from the fact that both parties speak different languages and that they undertake no serious attempt to arrive at mutual understanding? Don't the stumbling blocks—such as the concept of a divine personality, the meaning of history, the idea of creation, and numerous others—arise for the most part from this lack of mutual understanding, through the fact that both sides are satisfied with a kind of peaceful coexistence, which is undoubtedly comfortable, but endlessly superficial and not open to the future?

India cannot understand that the Roman Church, once it has shown its goodwill in seeking dialogue with all other religions of humankind, uses only the negative, if not disparaging formula "non-Christian religions" to refer to them, a designation committing an injustice to the variety of individual religions and excluding any recognition of their positive values. (The Japanese are convinced that all Europeans look alike. Europeans, for their part, are scarcely capable of distinguishing individual faces among the Japanese. This derives from the same character of unfamiliarity.) To have called them "world religions" would have been so simple—and so appropriate—and likewise to have designated the secretariat simply as *Secretariat of Religions* (*Secretariat of Religions*). Or if one occasionally makes distinctions nowadays, these—at least with respect to India—reveal an extraordinary naïveté. Thank God, one has not yet enrolled Hinduism among the monotheistic religions—as if one could ever introduce the notion of manifold deities into the conception of God.

One ought not point to the churches of Malabar as proof that the church is not foreign to India. In the first place, these churches never actually went beyond Kerala's borders, and in the second place, the internal situation is itself so complex that it can hardly serve as an example. Indeed, the church even now, despite two thousand years' presence in India, still seems like an import. Let us dare make a comparison. Could one not say that the church is a bit like those factories with their five-year plans found almost everywhere throughout India? A few parts, naturally, will be of national manufacture, but the essentials, the main parts, do they not always come from outside?

One cannot repeat often enough that the problem is very complex. A complete misunderstanding would result if one interpreted our comments on what is essentially an intra-ecclesial consideration as signifying some sort of approach toward politics or nationalism. Perhaps the caste system has contributed to the fact that the symbiosis between Christianity and India is taking place especially slowly, but much of this slowness is also due to the historical circumstances that have left their mark on the relations between Orient and Occident. What remains is the fact that Christianity in India has taken on a foreign face. This is no judgment, but a conclusion.

The church is surely *holy* and thus always more or less detached with regard to the world, never entirely adjusted to it, always either forging ahead or lagging behind. Its soul is the Holy Spirit; its body is that part of the cosmos that, as it passes through our deepest interiority, incessantly dies and resurrects there. Who knows, incidentally, whether—in the course of history—this detachment that we notice might not have actually been the only way to keep the Christian faith? God's ways are never our own.

4. Finally, the church seems *superficial* to the soul of the faithful Hindū. It appears to him without mysticism, even without liturgy in the deepest sense of the word. It gives the impression of occupying itself with many things while missing out on the only important thing. It is almost impossible, for example, to convince the intellectual caste of Hindūs that

the church makes room for mysticism, that even a place of honor is assigned to it in the church, and that the mystics are not merely endured with reservation by the church. Much the same holds for the conception of sacrifice. In the eyes of a Hindū, and also in how it presents itself to the glance of an uneducated person, the church is made for this world and not for the other.

The reason is not only that there are few great contemplative Christians in India (although India is rich in religious activities), or because the church—pressed by missionary fervor—is active. Rather, the whole spiritual climate of Indian Christianity seems entirely external to eschatology, mysticism, and interiority. Among the three great ways of Hindū spirituality, the *karma-mārga*, the path of work and action, seems to be the only one available to Christians. One sees no room in the church for the contemplative wisdom of *jñāna-mārga* and finds nearly as little room for *bhakti* (veneration through love). The exemplary sacrifice of the church's many members is without doubt generally recognized. What is admired, however, does not substitute for what is observed as lacking.

One should not take our frankness amiss. The fact that this honesty is allowed and that one can speak on all these things openly and with such clarity is sufficient sign for hope.

The church is clearly *catholic*. It refuses to adjust toward one side to the detriment of the other. It is reluctant, for example, to break away from its European past. It has no desire to separate itself from the mass of simple folk, either today or any time, in favor of intellectuals and more advanced believers. It is always demotic, even at the price of disappointing the best people. For the Church, the whole world is a folk. For the same reason, as well as from a kind of instinctive caution, it hesitates to venture into the experiential depths of Indic mysticism, of Advaita (a-duality) and Absolute Being. It asks itself, namely, how the "flock" could follow there. In this respect, so much more meaningful and urgent is the role of forerunners, prophets, and many others in this area. The courage demonstrated by the church fathers as they engaged in the most fundamental way with the "heathen" and Hellenistic world of experience should not be underestimated—which one, looking back, easily tends to do.

. . .

This situation is in principle not abnormal. It is a part of the church's *kenōsis*, the characteristic manner in which it takes the form of a servant in humility and self-lowering, a form innate to it during its earthly pilgrimage. The church—yes, even the church—can probably be only a useless maidservant, a vessel of clay, an inadequate tool. Thus can no flesh ever boast, nor any creature dispute, that salvation is exclusively the work of the One in whose name every knee bends, in heaven, on earth, and within the underworld.³ We repeat: this is not a matter of negative critique. We need not refer to the communist method of self-criticism to justify the searching of conscience and the public confession of sin. Does not renewal of life, for example, also necessarily belong to every spiritual life?

We are grateful for the permission to cite here a few lines by Msgr. Sigismondi, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*), which explicate the well-known story of David and Goliath from the book of Kings: "So far," he said, "we have attempted to fight unbelief and spread Christianity at a great and expensive cost through schools, orphanages, and political and social actions, among other methods . . . and we are forced, if not to confess our complete defeat, nevertheless to admit that the success has not been what we believed ourselves allowed to hope. David teaches us to give up all the

³ Phil 2:10.

heavy, rich arms and approach Goliath without armour, with simple pebbles of repentance, prayer, example, contemplation, and pure love."

One cannot doubt that India will open its whole heart to such a message offered not as a weapon designed for robbing India of its values but as an instrument of resurrection. Was this not, incidentally, also what the founders of missions still tried to realize before technology and financial means applied their law to mission work?

. . .

In conclusion, we want to say a few words about what the church can expect from India. This presupposes, however, the correct disposition and a comprehensive view of the kingdom of God. Christianity is not yet perfect. It must constantly guard itself against the great temptation that consists in satiety and satisfaction, of being pleased with what one already possesses. It pushes toward fullness in ever greater unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostleship. It therefore must—in an open, unforced synthesis, the fruit of an ever greater love—embrace and integrate all the fragments of being and value scattered throughout the world. Is this not exactly what Christ wanted to direct us to when he commanded his disciples to gather up all the pieces, all the crumbs of the bread that he had blessed and increased?⁴

The church expects from India, most of all, new ways of spiritual life and thought, a new theological deepening—not new births of dialectic but new elements of a saving wisdom. There are constraints today in every realm, as the Council attests clearly enough. The solution to the problems that people and the world put in the charge of the church calls for new perspectives, different categories of thought from those traditional to the West.

We do not wish to maintain that those of the Orient would themselves be more effective, yet we nourish the hope that a symbiosis between West and East, a real fruition of their combined intellectual and spiritual experience, will be able to produce that pressing renewal. Loyalty to tradition particularly impedes this difficult and precarious step forward. This step is no less needed on that account, and indeed precisely in obedience to this life-giving tradition.

What the church of our time still furthermore expects is a simplification of its thought, its forms, and its life. And is not the traditional India ready-made to assist in that matter? Hinduism is for the world a preferred witness of the "dispossession" that inevitably results from contemplating the Absolute. We have already indicated this. This spirit of liberation from everything is not entirely foreign to Christianity, but is not a re-reflection on it always useful? And especially a reminder of the necessity of spiritual renunciation, to the effect that whoever wants to enter the divine Mystery must leave all concepts behind? The church could also receive from India the meaning of a more real and comprehensive poverty, not as a shame to be endured with difficulty but as a good gift that one accepts with joy and thankfulness.

There is a saying that whoever knows only one religion knows no religion. One could add that anybody who fails to see his or her own religion in its universal dimension fails to live its total fullness. Everyone is bound to follow the path that conscience dictates. There are surely paths that are objectively better than others. Meanwhile, the "formal" basis of being, the way to be, is common to them all. They have, moreover, the same native soil that grounds them everywhere. But religions extend not merely in horizontal directions. They also strive vertically toward the heights, away from this earth that bears them all.

Hinduism offers the church most of all an impetus for a *catholic* deepening of Christianity, in other words, for its universality. The Christian faith has too often been lived as a

⁴ See Mt 14:20 and the parallel texts in the other Gospels. [n.d.t.]

religion that is only one among many, and thus as a rival of the others, rather than lived as the unfolding, transforming, and fulfilling of every religion.

The encounter with Hinduism can help the Christian faith become more aware of its own being. Christ was surprised, says the Gospel, to find so much belief outside Israel.⁵ The church can also only marvel to perceive the *Pantokrator's* rule everywhere. If even the hills await Him,⁶ how much greater then, in the heart of the Himalayan Mountains, will be the desire for His arrival.

⁵ Mt 8:10.

⁶ See such "messianic" texts as Ps 72:3; Song 2:8. [n.d.t.]

Part Seven

AN INDIC-CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF INCULTURATION*

The topic touches upon some of the most burning problems, both theoretical and practical, of contemporary India and the world at large. Peace and *svasti* depend on how this issue is seen and solved. There is much talk today, with religious-political overtones, about Christian *āśramas* and Christian adaptations of Hindū forms. This move is seen in very different ways, from being a strategy of penetration in order to destroy Hinduism to an inalienable right of Christians to enhance their religion, and what not.

I do not enter into the polemic, but would like to offer some considerations imbued with Sanskrit *samānvaya* and Greek *siphrosyne*. I do not say Christian *agape* or Hindū *bhakti* because these two words are already culturally tinged (they are “inculturated”: *bhakti* is pre-Hindū and *agape* pre-Christian). I limit myself to an outline of the issue.

* From K. Pathil (ed.), *Religious Pluralism* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991), pp. 252–99.

DEFINITIONS

No need to quote Confucius to substantiate the fact than an important symptom, and cause at the same time, of our present crisis is linguistic confusion. In order to introduce some clarity into our issue, I describe the horizon under which I understand the notions involved. Speaking about cultural issues, the *status quaestionis* is indispensable.

Indic

I use the word "Indic" to include a geographical, historical, and cultural reality spanning from the pre-Aryan times until our present situation in the Indian subcontinent.

The word "Indic" implies an awareness that we are not limited exclusively to the scene of the recent nation-state of India. Although this will be our main focus, in order to understand the reality of the peoples of the subcontinent we cannot ignore the frontiers of the past and overlook other different factors that have shaped the present-day situation of the country.

I understand the word "Indic" as expressing the crystallization of the last five thousand years that have formed the archetypes and underlying consciousness of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent. Any other approach is shortsighted and bound to oversimplify issues. We are not of yesterday, nor is the Hindū-Christian encounter a product of the British rule.

Christian

The problem could be eliminated in advance if we were to hold a fixed notion of the meaning of this word. But neither the contemporary scene nor the historical origins of Christianity allow us to fix, once and for all, the meaning of the word "Christian."

Phenomenologically, I understand the word "Christian" to mean a qualification by which a person, explicitly and in good faith, claims to be such, and such is recognized by a community.

This description entails, of course, a certain understanding of the Christian fact, but it is the most ecumenical and the least controversial of all descriptions. It does not lean on any particular doctrinal contents of the meaning of the word. Yet this apparently only formal definition has definite contents in any given situation in time and place. Only a particular situation in fact offers, in each case, the *mythos* within which the understanding of the word "Christian" is operative. The "setting" of the twentieth century (to use the Western calendar) and the dawning of the Indic peoples into this issue provides us with the horizon in which the meaning of the word "Christian" has clear intellectual contours for our times.

Something similar should be said about the meaning of the word "Hindū," in spite of the fact of being an alien and somewhat artificial name for the ancient *dharma*s of the Indic subcontinent.

Words have a life of their own, which reflect the living reality they reveal—without having to quote Bhartṛhari to substantiate this statement.

Christian Faith

Just as the expression “Christian religion” does not imply that only Christianity is a religion, the expression “Christian faith” does not imply that there is no faith outside Christianity. Grammar obliges us not to confuse adjectives (Christian, Hindū) with nouns (religion, faith). Just as Man is a religious being even if he does not belong to any established religion, he is a being endowed with faith even if it does not recognize any particular “faith” or creed. Faith is a constitutive human dimension. When Man acts out of this dimension, we have properly an act of faith. This act of faith, which is accessible to any human being, is what, according to religions, has saving power—although the notion of salvation may be understood differently by each particular religion.

What is generally called “Christian faith” is actually Christian *belief*. It is the Christian interpretation or understanding of faith. By “belief” I understand the articulation, mainly intellectual, of faith. Christian beliefs are generally expressed in what are called the Christian dogmas, that is, a set of formulations conveying the intellectual aspect of the act of faith within the Christian community. Faith is transcendently present in the many beliefs. Religions are generally classified by the nature of their beliefs.¹

Theology

The word can be understood, at least, in three different ways:

- a. In its widest sense, theology means any human dealing with ultimate issues. In this sense, any civilization has its own theology, and any religion produces its own theology as well. In a certain sense, this use is an abuse of the word (*a pars pro toto*) since this first notion does not require either to accept a *theos* or to operate with a *logos*.
- b. In the theistic traditions, “theology” means the dealing with the nature and functions of God, be it under the light of Man’s faculties, the guidance of God’s self-disclosure, or both.
- c. Christian theology appears as the set of symbols, doctrines, attitudes and insights that the Christian community has produced in the two-millennia-long course of its history. I submit, further, that Christian theology itself has undergone a threefold development: first as *fides quaerens intellectum*, second as *intellectus fidei*, and third as *logos tou Theou* (when the objective and subjective genitive coalesce).²

Religion

We find here also a threefold meaning. For heuristic reasons, I follow the inverse order of that of the previous paragraph.

- a. The proper place of the word “religion” is the field of theistic religions. Here *religare*, *religere*, and *relegere* are possible interpretations of a certain link between God and the creature.³
- b. The meaning of “religion” can be extended so as to include the established and recog-

¹ See my chapter on faith in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (Bangalore: ATC, 1983), pp. 185–229. Now in Volume IX.2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

² See my chapter “Can Theology Be Transcultural?” in P. Knitter (ed.), *Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), pp. 3–22.

³ See my book *Religionen und die Religion* (Munich: Hueber, 1965), pp. 33–41. Now in Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*.

nized belief systems of other cultures. It means the set of beliefs, cultural practices, symbols, and myths that a particular civilization holds as its spinal cord, and which gives meaning to the ultimate issues of human existence. Only in this second sense, for instance, is Buddhism a religion. It may be instructive to note here, parenthetically, that the "homeomorphic equivalent" of *dharma* is not so much "religion" as *logos*. To live according to *dharma* is homeomorphically equivalent to living according to the *logos* in Neoplatonic and Christian literature.⁴

c. The extrapolation can proceed further, transcend the current Western use of the word "religion," and expand into any other belief system people live by, even if the realm of the sacred (as vertical transcendence) has disappeared. Marxism, humanism, and scientism could be also called religions in this third sense. Religions do not have the monopoly on "religion."⁵

Pluralism

Since the word has become fashionable, it is important to distinguish between three expressions.

a. *The recognition of the fact of plurality.* This, which today seems almost obvious, has not always been so. If there were only one concept of sanctifying grace, the other conceptions of grace would not be grace: they would only be imitations or deformations of it. If Christianity, for instance, were the only true religion, the other so-called religions could not even be religions: they would be only pseudo-religions, as false silver is not silver but only apparently so. If there were only one true and authentic religion, there would be no plurality of religions.

The awareness of a legitimate plurality of religions belongs to the *kairos* of our times. From one particular perspective, one may like or dislike, accept or criticize a given religion, but this does not necessarily imply denying the character of religion to it. As far as I could gather, it has only been with Vatican Council II that the plurality of religions has officially been acknowledged by the Catholic Church. Before, either the other religions were taken as superstitions, with more or less truthful elements, or Christianity was believed to be more than "just" a religion.

b. *The tolerance of diversity.* To acknowledge that there is a plurality of religions does not entail that we have to agree with all of them, nor, on the other hand, that we have to deny them the right to be religions. Tolerance is the proper attitude. Tolerance may be seen either as a lesser evil or as a mystical *patientia*, or even as the redemption of the other.⁶ The expression "pluralistic society," so often used in political circles today, simply means the tolerance of diversity and the respect for the rights of cultural and religious minorities.

c. *Pluralism.* The two preceding notions are not yet proper pluralism. Pluralism does imply (a) and (b), but it goes a step further. Pluralism is more than a *de facto* recognition that there are different religious traditions and the acknowledgment that the only way of peaceful coexistence is mutual tolerance. Pluralism entails the awareness that this human fact of irreducible diversity, which has been in place since the beginning of human history, belongs to a *de jure* status of the human condition.

Pluralism aims at mutual understanding but does not expect the ongoing dialogue to be the final step in which all disagreements will be reduced to a homogeneous unity. Pluralism recognizes the fact that the human condition is not only contingent in front of a vertical

⁴ See Nakamura Hajime, "The Indian and Buddhist Concepts of Law," in E. J. Jurji (ed.), *Religious Pluralism and World Community* (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

⁵ See my article "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Philadelphia) 11(3) (1974): pp. 515–17. Now in Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁶ I dealt with the mystical aspect of tolerance in *Pluralismus, Toleranz und Christenheit* (Nürnberg: Abendländische Akademie, 1961), pp. 117–42. Now in Volume VI.1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

mystery; it also recognizes the presence of that mystery on the horizontal level of human affairs and in intellectual comprehension. The incomprehensible is not only above us; it is also at our side, in our neighbor. From a particular point of view, we will never be able to understand another perspective, although we may recognize that several points of view are incompatible among them.

Pluralism arises with the awareness of mutually incompatible and irreconcilable worldviews, religions, interpretations, philosophies, up to the point of not allowing for any super-system, super-religion, or *Aufhebung*. We are confronted with our human limitations. The ultimate insight of pluralism is the recognition that Reality is not necessarily self-transparent, totally intelligible. Monotheism is here at stake. The link that binds all of us together is not *logos* but *pneuma*—not understanding, but love, sympathy, *karuṇā*. Paradoxically, the “link” is ontic and not necessarily ontological.⁷

Culture

There are scores of definitions of culture (164 in a recent study) and hundreds of books on the subject.⁸ Only three features are stressed here.

a. Culture as we mean it in today's language is a modern word. It appeared in the seventeenth century and was first established in eighteenth-century Europe. The word *cultura* used by Cicero and Horace means a different thing. Before the dominance of this word (together with “civilization”), instead of one single notion we find in Europe literally dozens of names covering the field. In Greek there are *arete*, *paideia*, and so on. Of Latin origin we have, for instance, *civilitas*, *cultus*, *urbanitas*, *humanitas*, *Christianitas*, *Romanitas*, *homagium*, *moderatio*, *nobilitas*, *eruditio*, *industria humana*, class, art, *cortesia*, *politesse*, and “genus humanum arte et ratione vivit,”⁹ says Thomas Aquinas commenting Aristotle. Of Anglo-Saxon origin we may mention, *mæze*, *zucht*, *hövescheit*, *hübescheit*, *Bildung*, *Gesittung*, *Aufklärung*, *Anständigkeit*, and so on. Monier-Williams's *English-Sanskrit Dictionary* gives Sanskrit equivalents for “cultivation,” but not for “culture” (except perhaps the artificial compound *vidyānusevanam*, cultivation of science), and rightly so. A *vidyānusevin* is simply a scholar, an erudite, somebody engaged in learning, a *paṇḍit*.

We mention all this just to say one thing: the notion of culture, wide as it may be and vague as it may remain (“Nichts ist unbestimmter als dieses Wort,”¹⁰ wrote Herder, the first great theoretician of this notion), represents a certain global awareness of the sum of values according to which a particular human group lives. It represents an overall vision, a general worldview. The word is particularly apt for encompassing, say, the modern Western Christian vision of the world as embodied in a definite human group. In that sense, the birth of the notion of culture signifies a win and a loss.

It signifies a *win* inasmuch as it offers us a holistic vision of the lifestyle of a particular society and allows us to compare it with another one. In brief, the word “culture,” in this general and new sense, allows for a plural. There may be *many* cultures, while *politesse*,

⁷ See my article “The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel—A Meditation on Non-Violence,” *Cross Currents* 29(2) (Summer 1979): pp. 197–230. Now in Volume VI.2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁸ For an introduction, see entries on “Culture” in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan-Free Press, 1968); J. Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 4 (Basel: Schwabe, 1976); J. Knobloch et al. (eds.), *Europäische Schlüsselwörter*, vol. 3: *Kultur und Zivilisation* (Munich: Hueber, 1967); etc.

⁹ “Humankind lives out of art/technique and reason.”

¹⁰ “Nothing is less definite than this word.”

courtesy, *Romanitas*, *Bildung*, and the like are more univocal names. Culture is a gender, not a species. We may overcome fanaticisms and exclusivisms of all kinds. We become aware that we do not exhaustively represent Man or Nature, but we belong to *one* culture among many. There is *one* human nature, but there are many human cultures.

It is also a *loss* inasmuch as it tends to introduce a kind of relativism, eclecticism, indifference, and superficiality in the self-understanding of oneself and one's society. It seems as if culture as such were just a dispensable human value. Until the times of Francis Bacon and even later, the very word "culture" would always require a genitive: culture *of* something. A man of the Middle Ages, or even the Renaissance, would have always asked "culture of what?" And if suddenly introduced to the modern notion, they would have wondered from what independent standpoint we might claim to speak of culture in general. The modern conception contains *in nuce* a sort of loss of spontaneity and innocence. We become heavily self-reflective, which we have mistakenly identified with a positive critical attitude. We can, and should, develop a critical mind. But, if we are critical about everything including the very foundations on which our criticism lies, we will never be able to proceed ahead, to say anything. Some cosmic confidence is required.

I am keen to underscore this point in order to set the present-day discussion in a wider perspective and, I hope, in a brighter light.

b. Synthesizing the hundreds of definitions today current among scholars—"way of life," "set of life patterns," "sum total of beliefs, rites, symbols, customs, notions, behavioral motivations" of a given human society, and so on—I would sum it all up by saying that culture represents the underlying *mythos* of a people. By *mythos* I mean that ever-elusive and always unreachable horizon against which we situate all our actions and thoughts so that they make *sense*—in the manifold connotations of this word: direction, orientation, meaning, reality, perception, and so on. Culture forms the mythical universe in which we live. "Au regard de la philosophie, le non-philosophique se présente comme culture": "In the eyes of philosophy, nonphilosophical phenomena are seen as culture,"¹¹ as it was said at the opening lecture of the Seventeenth World Congress of Philosophy (Montreal, 1983), the theme of which was precisely "Philosophy and Culture."

c. Following the Greek distinction between *nomí* (by law) and *physei* (by nature), anthropologists have too deeply stressed the difference between culture and nature. This dichotomy is being slowly superseded today. The fact that, properly speaking, only Man has a culture brings us near to the notion that the very nature of Man is a cultural one. Man is a cultural animal.

Cultures are not just multicolored garbs of one and the same human nature. We cannot change our culture as we change our clothes. The problems of inculturation cannot be properly dealt with by considering culture simply as an extrinsic expression of an a-cultural "thing in itself" called human nature. Culture is the specific form of human nature. There may be a hierarchy of cultures (always against a cultural scale), but there is no Man without culture as there is no human being without language.

In short, culture is not folklore, not an adjunct, not something we can dispense with, an accident of human life that we may change at will. The problem of inculturation is an anthropological and a theological question. Culture is more than cultural fashions. Culture is something belonging to the very nature of Man.

¹¹ F. Dumont, "Mutations culturelles et philosophie," in V. Cauchy (ed.), *Philosophie et Culture* (Montreal: Beffroi-Montmorency, 1986), p. 53.

Cultural Change

Man is not an immutable entity: he changes. Cultures also are not static entities: they change. Even a cursory reading of present-day literature, which in this case covers from anthropology to theology passing through social sciences and philosophy, yields at least the following notions, which we should at least mention. In order to proceed toward our problems, I am obliged to summarize, to be sketchy and renounce to any citation. Many of the expressions designating cultural change are polysemous, and different authors give different meanings to them. I enumerate only a few notions.

Cultural change can be brought about by:

1. *Growth*. It comes from a natural exchange with the surrounding cultures. By means of a natural metabolism, one particular culture intensifies and perfects its own features up to a critical limit. Growth comes from within, but it is nourished from the outside.

2. *Development*. It is related to the former. It is a fashionable word today. Its meaning extends from a pejorative but realistic description as "a shared belief generating compulsory social practices" transforming "social relations and nature into commodities to be bought and sold on the market" (Gilbert Rist) to any type of social progress, generally according to modern Western standards.

3. *Evolution*. It is related to the previous notion, although with different connotations. It is an "overloaded" word indeed. Cultural evolution seems to imply a change promoted by a more or less natural selection of cultural values. Cultures would then evolve, struggling for survival over less adapted or adaptable cultures.

4. *Involution*. The notion is being used to express the retrieval from more recent changes, in one particular society, because the most recent changes are seen as a denial of one's own cultural identity. Some sociologists, for instance, speak of an involution in the Catholic Church as a psychiatrist would speak of an involution of personality. It is a resistance against the extrinsic pressure of allegedly foreign cultural values.

5. *Renovation*. It suggests the effort, from within a culture, to regain its pristine status. Whatever side the stimulus may come from, the forces that bring about the renewal stem from within the culture itself.

6. *Reconception*. The change in self-understanding can take the form of reconception, by which the culture in question enlarges its own interpretation so as to be able to include other forms that until then seemed incompatible with orthodox ways. It was William Ernest Hocking who used this method to find a way for dealing with other religions from a Christian point of view. Today we would call it reinterpretation or even creative hermeneutics.

7. *Reform*. It implies that something has gone wrong with culture, and there is now a need for a certain modification of "forms," a special metamorphosis. The impulse is generally endogenous, although a "prophet" is normally needed in order to trigger the reaction. Some anthropologists call it "the individual variation." *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* (the church constantly needs to be reformed) is an ancient Christian slogan.

8. *Innovation*. It is related to the former, with an emphasis on exogenous factors bringing about the renewal. While renovation looks back to the sources of a culture, innovation is more sensitive to the present. A widespread name for this, in Christian circles, is *aggiornamento* (updating, in Italian; launched by Pope John XXIII).

9. *Revivalism*. It is a contemporary expression indicating the bringing back to life of some aspects of a particular culture that are deemed to have been blurred by the passing of time, covered by the dust of history, or neglected by the inertia of people. It tends to be a selective revitalization of simple notions, which leads to the fundamentalist character of many revivals.

10. *Revolution*. It entails an overturning of cultural values, generally produced by an artificially planned intervention of a small "party," which may have endogenous or exogenous character. A common underlying idea is that the change of structures will, more or less automatically, modify the status quo (H. Arendt).

11. *Mutation*. This would be the aim of most revolutions, although a mutation may also occur by other causes like wars, catastrophes, and so on. Mutation implies a certain rupture in the cultural patterns. There is an element of discontinuity, a jump.

12. *Progress*. It has been the most widely used word for a somewhat peaceful cultural change with a positive axiological meaning. It represents a going "ahead" (from Latin *pro-gredi*) by any cause which, coming from the inside or the outside, leads to a better cultural stage. It is almost synonymous with many of the already mentioned notions. *Regression* would be, of course, a sort of negative progress.

13. *Diffusion*. It is used, especially in cultural anthropology, to express the inner vitality of a particular culture, which by its own dynamics successfully tends to penetrate into neighboring cultures.

14. *Osmosis*. It is almost synonymous with the previous one. If "mutation" is a biological term applied to sociology, "osmosis" is a physical term suggesting that the cultural influence proceeds in one particular direction due to the superior or more powerful character (higher pressure) of the influencing culture.

15. *Borrowing*. It is related to the two previous ones, and it suggests an adoption of foreign cultural values because they are found "useful" for the borrowing culture. The initiative here comes from within, unlike the two previous notions.

16. *Eclecticism*. This word, like the following one, has been often used as a polemic concept charged with theological presuppositions. In fact, it can be used to connote opposite attitudes. It generally denotes a choice (from Greek *eklegein*, to select, choose) of different ideas or practices belonging to different systems, religions, or cultures. The choice is made by virtue of an axiological criterion, generally a pragmatic one, that is extrinsic to the system in question.

17. *Syncretism*. Another ambiguous word. It implies a fusion similar to the previous one, not by virtue of a conscious choice but rather as a result of historical inertia or a fruit of the spontaneity of the spirit. We may say, for instance, that present-day Christianity is the syncretistic fruit of Judaism, Hellenism, and Gothic culture, while at the time of the formation of the Christian dogmas the belief would have been one of formulating an original Christian doctrine. In fact, both claims could be true.

18. *Modernization*. It has a general meaning related to many of the previous notions, and a more particular meaning as the adoption of "modern" values, which, having originated in one particular culture, are presented or seen, rightly or wrongly, as capable of bringing the host culture "up to date." It has an declared "temporal" flavor, as the very word suggests. Well-known today are the raging discussions in Africa and Asia about whether or not modernization entails Westernization.

19. *Indigenization*. It goes in the almost opposite direction than the previous one, except that it shares with it the positive value attributed to the change. Both are generally seen as improvements, although some people evaluate both processes negatively. The notion has a concrete application in the case of a Christian culture that, after having lived for a certain time as a foreign body within a host culture, now tries to get rid of its current garb and adopt the indigenous cultural forms of the society in which it happens to live.

20. *Adaptation*. It expresses a general dynamism of which the previous notion is a particular case. It is a kind of adjustment to the host culture, for different reasons, like survival, influence, merger, and so on. It was a keyword in the Christian missions until not

too long ago. Christians were asked to adapt themselves, as much as they could, to the "pagan" cultures without denying their "Christian faith" or creating confusion among the indigenous populations. The problem was *where* to draw the line.

21. *Accommodation*. It is another name related to the previous attitudes. The word has a nuance connoting a certain acceptance of the foreign value for the sake of a peaceful coexistence, or simply tranquility.

22. *Adoption*. It means a conscious introduction of an external idea, symbol, or practice for the benefit of the host culture.

23. *Translation*. The transforming power of cultural changes brought about by literary translations has sometimes been overlooked. The translation of the Bible, for instance, into vernacular languages has been an important factor of cultural change both in the past and in the present. The fact that Vedas and the Qur'an—to continue with the same example—have had, for important reasons, a stronger reluctance to being translated than the Bible has wide cultural implications.

24. *Conversion*. There is no doubt that religious conversions bring about cultural changes. When a person or a group is converted, they accept a set of beliefs that are rooted and expressed in a cultural language often diverse from that of the convert, and that articulate a worldview certainly different from the previous one. Conversion has cultural effects too. A Hindū converting to Christianity, for instance, will cease to partake in what he or she considers incompatible with the new belief, and will perform rituals proper to the new community. Any conversion entails a change of mind. At the same time, converts carry with them an amount of conscious and unconscious archetypes, attitudes, and reactions, and serve as factors of change in both directions—even if the convert adopts a more rigid orthodoxy than the older members (thus triggering an opposite reaction).

25. *Transformation*. This word stands for an internal change in the basic structure of a culture, a new vision of life or the meaning of existence. It is more than a mere reform. It is akin to mutation, but it suggests that the transition is brought about by a kind of paradigm shift, so that the "form" or *morphé* enlivening a particular culture undergoes a change that is precisely a "trans-formation," a "meta-morphosis," by an inner process stemming from the previous culture, although brought about by extrinsic factors. It is more than reform and less than destruction ("deformation").

26. *Fecundation*. The word, like the synonymous *fertilization*, suggests an internal cultural change due to an external seed that has been introduced into the host culture and given birth to a new type of self-understanding, and ultimately of culture.

27. *Acculturation*. It is perhaps the most common name today, since the word *enculturation* has not prospered. In its most general sense, it is used when a particular group lives in constant contact with another one. Or it can also indicate a conscious effort at producing such a homogenization.

28. *Inculturation*. This seems to be a preferred expression to denote almost the same as the previous notion. I would suggest reserving this term to indicate the conscious effort at adopting another culture.

29. *Interculturation*. As far as I can say, this word was timidly introduced in 1980 by Bishop Joseph Blomjous. The word means a two-way traffic and underscores partnership and mutuality. It suggests a natural symbiosis between two cultures, whether the influence is effected by spontaneous living together or by a conscious will.

. . .

Summing up, we may say:

- a. Cultures are fluid entities, not only amenable to change, but also requiring change.
- b. This change can be brought about by extrinsic or intrinsic elements, but a collaboration of both factors is indispensable.
- c. Cultural change, being almost indispensable for a human society to survive in history, has an ambivalent meaning, and can thus trigger a new type of culture and/or a "better" one, or lead to the practical disappearance of the older culture.

An Indic-Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism in the Perspective of Interculturation

Our concrete problem is the following: there are today an increasing number of Christians and Christian theologians, culturally belonging to the Indic universe, who wonder if and how the Christic element could be inculturated in the Indic subcontinent without harming the acknowledged pluralism, which needs to be respected.

The issue seems to assume that

- a. There is a *real* problem, for those theologians represent the "spirit of the time" and a heartfelt need of the Christian community.
- b. The Christic element is at least enveloped in a culture different from the main Indic cultures.
- c. None of the Indic religions should be eliminated, since this would entail an impoverishment of the rich Indic heritage, Christian and tribal, Hindū, Muslim, and so on.

In other words, what happens to both Christianity and the other religions of India when Indian Christians start up an inculturation of their beliefs, rites, and symbols into the more ancient cultures of the subcontinent?

By "religious inculturation" we understand the trespassing of cultural boundaries by a particular religious group. This inculturation has profound theological significance, which has not been sufficiently studied. It challenges the rigid relationship between culture and religion. However, not every cultural form is suitable to every religion. Religions are *also* cultural constructs.

What is the theological justification, if any, for adopting and adapting forms and symbols belonging to other religions? I indicate some ways of approach to the problem for *further* research and dialogue.

NINE SŪTRAS

I would like to present some principles, which may elicit a certain consensus. For the sake of brevity, I simply enunciate them in the form of *sūtras* followed by their respective *bhāṣyas*.

1. Religion Is the Soul of Culture

This statement should sound convincing if we take "religion" and "culture" in a wide sense. Each culture, implicitly or explicitly, accepts an ultimate axiology based on a *mythos* of what the *humanum* really and specially means—using a contemporary way of speaking, since each culture would formulate the question differently. There is no culture without a set of ultimate values. And this is what constitutes the spine of religion.

Man creates cultures when he becomes conscious of himself, and of being an unfinished entity with the capacity of cultivating its own being—which is not limited to its ego but also encompasses its surroundings: human, cosmic, and divine. This awareness is at the very basis of religion. Each culture begins with, or at least develops, a vision of reality. The principle enlivening this vision is what we call religion.

Western and Indic cultures are not religiously neutral. Their core is religious, even if, according to some standards, one may like to call some cultures "a-religious," which is simply another form of being religious. The meeting of cultures, when it goes deep enough, is always a religious encounter. Ultimate values are at stake.¹

2. Culture Is the Body of Religion

This second *sūtra* does not subordinate culture to religion. There is no soul without a body. The body is the very expression of the soul. This expression is mainly language. For this reason, this second *sūtra* could be formulated as "Culture gives religion its language." No amount of mystical experience can prevent Man from speaking. But the moment Man speaks, even if we claim that we only repeat what we heard from On High, we have to speak a human, that is, a communitarian language that has been previously given and culturally shaped. In short, religious language is a cultural language. No religion is culturally neutral, for the same reason that religion is not a disembodied entity.

Incarnation, resurrection, *zen*, *nirvāṇa*, *ātman*, *brahman*, and the like may all try to convey pure transcendental notions. Nevertheless, all those notions are culturally tinged and have a meaning, and even more specially the meaning of the particular culture that has

¹ See my "La religión del futuro o la crisis del concepto de religión—La religiosità humana," *Civiltà delle macchine* 27(4–6) (1979): pp. 82–91. Now in Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*.

had the insight expressed in those words. We do not speak "language," we speak *a* language, and that language is given us by a culture—whatever the origins of that language may be.

3. Culture and Religion Share an Advaitic Relationship

We should neither confuse culture with religion, nor overlook their respective *ontonomies*.² There are spaces of freedom in each field of human activity, but we should not put artificial walls between those fields either. It would be an unnatural isolation, with disastrous effects on both religion and culture. Religion and culture are not "the same" (the same *what?*), and yet there is no religion outside culture and no culture that does not embody a religious attitude.

The controversy about the Chinese rites in past centuries offers a telling example. The Western-Christian theological justification of those Chinese rites with the "excuses" that they were "only" civil, secular, etiquette ceremonies, devoid of religious connotations, simply did not hold for the Chinese. Yet it was the only way of defending the case before the Roman authorities. Those ceremonies were certainly not rigidly tied to dogmatic beliefs, as the Western mentality of the times would only understand religion, but they were part and parcel of a homogeneous and organic culture that neither accepted the dichotomy between religion and culture nor considered religion a dogmatic affair. The Chinese rites were not the religious rites of a culture (as the West discussed), but the cultural rituals of a religion (as the West overlooked).

We may therefore conclude: *there is no religion without language, and there is no language without culture*. The corollary being our next *sūtra*.

4. Inculturation Is Not a Religiously Neutral Act

We can no longer afford to be innocent tourists, ignoring that we are upsetting the subtlest and most vital cultural fabric of the lands we visit. Whether we accept or reject inculturation, we cannot do it on the assumption that cultural incursions have no religious consequences. We cannot claim for Christians the right to adopt Hindū cultural forms while ignoring that we are making fundamental theological statements regarding the nature of both Christianity and Hinduism. If Christians, for instance, adopt traditional Hindū ways of prayer, say chanting *Om/aum* and the *gāyatrī*, and do not want to fall into a shallow eclecticism, rejected by both traditions, they must be aware that they are not just borrowing a formal sign but using a living symbol. They are further saying that the power of that symbol is not foreign to them; that they join the Hindū tradition in seeing *aum* as the recapitulation of the universe—similar to what traditional Christians see in the eschatological Christ; that they are comfortable in sharing the power of a symbol that denotes, connotes, and existentially triggers an entire universe of discourse, worship, and action; that they are not pronouncing the Sacred Name in vain. *Amen*.

But there is also the counterpart. If we share, we really participate. Sharing is not plundering. There has to be reciprocity. Through the gate of *aum* not only do Christians enter, as it were, in communion with the Hindū tradition: the Hindūs also take part in the communion of the body of Christ. But reciprocity strikes deep problems. It might well be that a Hindū does not want such a communion and prefers to keep a separate identity, perhaps for fear of being absorbed into a foreign "fold" or incorporated into an alienating religion. Christians willingly

² *Ontonomy* is the internal and constitutive relationship between beings. It is different both from an extrinsic heteronomy and an intrinsically unrelated autonomy, as I have explained in many texts.

join Gandhi's call that Hindū temples should be open to *harijans*, but the houses of the rich Christians remain closed to the poor. We are too prone to see the speck in our neighbor's eye.

If Christianity is inextricably linked with a certain understanding of it, and any understanding is culturally bound, the introduction of Hindū values into Christianity entails a change in the Christian self-understanding. But this change has to face the possibility of an opposite reaction from the other side, and take it into account. If Hindūs, for instance, react to the fact that Christians follow Hindū ceremonial practices, Christians should equally ponder whether they would like a Hindū to perform the Eucharist or to be baptized because he or she interprets it as a "merely civil" act, as it is the case with so many Western baptized Christians. What about putting a cross instead of a star on the communist emblem of the hammer and the sickle?

In short, in order to accept or reject inculturation we need to develop a theology of pluralism.

5. Inculturation Was Justified by the Modern Christian Belief That the Christic Fact Is Supernatural and Thus Supracultural

For many centuries Christianity has understood itself as bearing a message that is supernatural and, therefore, supracultural, that is, capable of any culture receiving it. The incarnation of Christ was considered a supernatural act, and thus an act that could be religiously reenacted in any culture. Jesus was a Jew, but Indian Christians deem to have the right to see Christ as an Indian Anointed One, as their own Messiah, their *Christos*. This is a modern belief, we said. In point of fact, the Christic event—the resurrection of Christ, to be more precise—was experienced by the first Christians as something unique, concrete, and thus with immediate application to Greek and Jew, free and slave, male and female alike. The very notion of culture was absent. They would not have special dogmas; they were just witnessing to a fact that could not even be said to be merely a historical event, for it had transhistorical connotations and consequences. They were not immediately conscious that to be a Christian requires a particular cultural understanding of that event.

Innocence broke down on two sides. *On the one side*, the Christian self-understanding developed precisely by dint of an acculturation to the surrounding Mediterranean world. It formulated a body of dogmas that grew out of Judeo-Hellenic-Roman-Germanic cultures. The *corpus* of today's Christianity belongs to what we may roughly call Western culture.

In other words, the alleged Christian supernatural message, in order to be received, needs to be understood. It has to be culturally assimilable. In the last centuries there have been plenty of missionary reports describing how understanding of Christian doctrine requires a certain cultural "sophistication." This was the foundation for the so-called basic evangelization, that is, the introduction of those cultural values that were felt as requisites for the mere understanding of the Christian message—and its Hellenic theology, of course.³ Without a certain notion of sin, sex, creation, time, and individual, for instance, those missionaries felt incapable of preaching redemption, monogamy, work, forgiveness, and hell or heaven as individual destiny. The Christian kerygma was made dependent on a certain cultural understanding of reality.⁴ "Grace presupposes nature," it was said, and nature requires a certain

³ See my article "Indirect Methods in Missionary Apostolate," *Indian Journal of Theology* 19(3-4) (1970): pp. 111-13.

⁴ See my reflections on the subject in "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology," *Concilium* 6(5) (1969): pp. 435-41.

culture. Christian missionaries had to introduce certain cultural values in order to make the Christian message at least understandable. Inculturation was part of evangelization.

On the other side, Christians soon came in touch with people belonging to different cultural and religious worlds. A particular mental inertia and/or historical arrogance was perhaps responsible for an uncritical extrapolation of the first situation. The Christic seed had become a Christian tree that had grown in a particular cultural earth. It was no longer potentially everything,⁵ but an actual religion. To throw the Gospel's seeds to the four winds is different than to implant a grown-up church or to transplant a whole set of symbols and doctrines.

For centuries, this idea of Christendom as a definite sociocultural reality was justified with a Crusade mentality, a fruit of viewing Islam as the historical threat to Christian existence. In the last five centuries, the identification of Christianity with the remnants of Christendom and the overall colonial mentality of expansionist Europe led to forgetting the fact that Christianity was linked to a particular culture. Orthodox and heterodox Christians tended to believe that their culture was called to become *the* world culture, at least of the civilized world. The syndrome is still alive in our days, and modern science and technology are the heirs of such a mentality.

If Christianity as a set of doctrines and practices could not be said to be strictly supernatural, the church at least was considered to be supracultural. Documents in this sense abound since the first centuries. This belief justified the ancient dictum *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the church) and its echoes in the *signum levatum in nationes* (sign being uplifted over the nations) of Vatican Council I, and the theology of *populus Dei* (God's people) of Vatican II, together with the idea of the *sacramentum mundi*, or better said in Greek with its patristic connotations, *mysterion tou kosmou* (the cosmic Mystery).

We may reinterpret those principles, enlarge and deepen the idea of *ekklesia*, but the fact remains that there seems to exist a modern Christian belief in the special, that is, exclusive mission of Christianity, Christians, or at least the church.

While anthropological literature is generally open to the phenomenon of inculturation, most of the theological literature on inculturation seems to practically ignore the other side of the problem and is almost exclusively interested in how Christians shall best express and live their beliefs, ignoring that a Black Madonna, for instance, may not only represent the Virgin Mary but also the Mother Goddess.

6. Today, Both Myths—Christianity's Religious Superiority and the Church's Cultural Immunity—Are in Crisis

There are still Christians who believe in their cultural superiority, as well as there are some theologians who hold to a supernatural, and thus privileged position exclusively granted to Christianity. But, on the whole, for an increasing number of people, including thinkers and theologians, both beliefs do not hold any longer.

This does not mean that the alternative is sheer relativism, indifference, and renunciation to any truth claims. There is no need, for instance, to dismantle the theology of the supernatural (this problem should be dealt with on its own merits). It will suffice not to confuse the fact of being supernatural with the exclusivistic pretense at being "supernatural." There is no need, either, to deny the fact that there may be a hierarchy of cultures and cultural values. It will suffice to disentangle the church from such discussions, which should be resolved with a proper and independent methodology.

⁵ "Anything in potency": adapting Aristotle's definition of human soul. [n.d.t.]

A theology of pluralism addresses itself directly to this issue. Truth itself is pluralistic.⁶ Pluralism does not amount to relativism. It does not invalidate the fact that a religion can interpret itself as being of a unique and even superior value, but it will not need to degrade the other religions to be "less unique" and of an inferior order. It will simply say that religions are incomparable since they cannot be compared from a suprarreligious point of view, because this viewpoint is not accepted by the partners in the comparison. It could well be, for instance, that religions are incommensurable precisely because they are dimensions of each other, like the radius is incommensurable with the circumference, while both belonging to the circle.

This discussion is not the place to develop the implications of this theology. It will suffice to note that, if the church wants to adopt the forms of another culture that until now had not been the vehicle of its life, it cannot claim the privilege of being above and beyond any culture. There is no diplomatic immunity of any sort for a church that wants to be "people." The problem of inculturation brings the entire Christian theology into question. It is not a secondary issue.

Let us put it quite pointedly. The Christian message may be a supernatural event. Yet incarnation itself is already a cultural fact. And this is so on two accounts: first *anthropological*, and second *philosophical*.

a. Incarnation means the divine *logos* becoming flesh (Jn 1:14)—or, as theology further developed it, the second Person of the Trinity physically taking on the nature of a man called Jesus. But Man is not only a natural animal, he is also a cultural being. If "God" takes on the nature of a concrete man, He also takes on the culture of a particular man. Not only human nature is taken on: human culture is, too. "God" becomes "inculturated," as it were. The particularity of the man Jesus remains an abstraction if it excludes the cultural particularity of that man. If his bones are divine, his words also are divine, including meaning and sound. This is a crude way of repeating what many theologians affirm when they say that, in the incarnation, God becomes history, and that therefore history is an irreplaceable Christian category. In Christ, God takes on a created nature and a human culture. In this sense, Christianization already amounts to inculturation: into the culture of history, of the individual, of the fundamental tenets of Judaism, as St. Paul for instance interpreted them (God creator and remunerator⁷). All this is inextricably tinged with a particular culture.

b. The incarnation appears as a cultural fact also from a general philosophical perspective. There is no need of much philosophical acumen to be aware of the splendid, or for some terrifying, diversity of the *humanum*. There are cultures and religions for which the very idea of incarnation makes no sense, it does not enter into their ways of thinking; their minds are not "circumcised" according to the manner of Moses, that is, the Semitic/Hellenic framework. To accept the incarnation (if this is considered the central Christian dogma) already implies the acceptance of a particular culture, of certain insights that are not universal; they belong to the Mediterranean cultures, broadly speaking.

The difference between Christian incarnation and Hindū *avatāras* show this point. To emphasize the communion of the divine with the Human in a mainly dualistic culture, the Christian belief sees in Christ an unrepeatable and unique event that subsumes all "descents" of the divine from alpha to omega. A multiplication of Christ would appear as a contradiction in terms. To emphasize the same communion in a mainly monistic culture, the *vaishnava* belief sees in the *avatāra* a descent of the divine in the form (appearance) of a

⁶ See my chapter "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge," in L. S. Rouner (ed.), *Religious Pluralism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 97–115. Now in Volume VI.1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁷ See Rom 1:20; Heb 11:6.

creature, which of course can occur as often as "God" deems it necessary, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* says. A multiplicity of *avatāras* is almost called for, precisely to prevent the "capriciousness" of a particular divine choice. A homeomorphic equivalent of Christ would be the *śakti* in Kashmiri Āiṅgism, for instance, not the *avatāra* symbol of Vaiṣṇavism.

The first two millennia of Christian self-understanding have been smoothing those crude statements, but basically accepting them. This is the challenge of Asia to Christianity in the third Christian millennium, as I have already pointed out.⁸ It is a Pandora's box, indeed.

How far can Christian inculturation proceed? Here again, pluralism has a baffling response. "What" Christians call Christ may be present in culturally non-Christian forms. "What" Christians cannot understand and believe except within a cluster of cultures may "take flesh" in cultures incompatible with the present-day historical Christian belief. I have put "what" in quote marks because there is no need to make an *ontological* substance with that *grammatical* subject. Christians call Christ a Mystery, and Christian Scriptures speak of a Christic emptiness.⁹ "What" Christians call Christ is but an aspect and a name, and a true one at that, of that ineffable Mystery, as I have tried to explain elsewhere.¹⁰

Let us timidly suggest some further hints. They are not universally valid but only in tune with the Indian contemporary scene. Incarnation means the total divinization of the man called Jesus Christ, be it at his birth or at resurrection. It has been understood as God taking on human nature, deifying human nature. It happens certainly in Jesus the Christ, but this Christ, as the Second Adam, represents the full humanity of the entire creation. The Christian redemption is not just "buying" you back from the devil's paws. It is an act of transforming human nature by the second Person of the Trinity and the power of the Spirit, and all coming from the *fons et origo totius divinitatis*,¹¹ the Father, creating, redeeming, and glorifying the entire creation all in one—although distended in time and extended in space. Christ is the Head, but the whole universe is the Body. Incarnation in this sense—that is, as God becoming flesh, not just as Jesus or history—is the symbol of the necessary inculturation of Man, for human culture cannot be separated from human nature, although they should be distinguished.

The revelation in Christ is then understood, as the third generation of Christians explicitly did, as a cosmic act in which the distinction between the Human and the Divine is not destroyed, but the separation is overcome. In Christ, Christians receive the revelation that God becomes culture as well as nature, and not just one single nature and one single culture. The incarnation is then the particular Christian symbol to express the communion between the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic. To be sure, Christians will assert that the nature of Jesus, together with the Semitic culture, has a paradigmatic value *for them*.

7. A Conscious Inculturation Demands a Reinterpretation of the Religions Involved in the Process

I discard the extrinsic motivations of inculturation—like promoting conversions for the sake of "saving souls," or as a strategy for getting power, either political or religious—that may lurk as temptations behind inculturation, as well as behind any other human affair. Our problem is not dealing with possible abuses but with the meaning of inculturation.

⁸ See my "La interpellació de l'Àsia al cristianisme," in *Teologia i Vida* (Barcelona: Claret, 1984), pp. 81–93.

⁹ See Phil 2:7.

¹⁰ See my chapter, "The Meaning of Christ's Name in the Universal Economy of Salvation," in J. Pathrapankal (ed.), *Service and Salvation* (Bangalore: TPI, 1973), pp. 235–63.

¹¹ Source and origin of the whole Godhead.

We have already said that inculturation today cannot be justified under the assumption that adopting—say—the customs, ritual gestures, and doctrinal vocabulary of Hinduism by Christian communities is a religiously neutral act, and just a matter of ecclesiastical or secular observance. Inculturation co-involves the Hindū *dharma* as well as it entails a new understanding of the Christian belief. We require a theological foundation justifying and criticizing such practices—from both sides.

One thing is the spontaneous and inevitable acculturation we find, for instance, in the old Christian communities of Kerala. Another thing is the active inculturation taking place under the assumption that it is anybody's right to adopt other people's customs and beliefs, even when they do not emerge spontaneously as a result of social symbiosis.

There also is a difference between a tradition no longer shaping the lives of people and a living religion. Dionysius the Areopagite calls Plato's *daimones* "angels," and up to the fifteenth century Marsilio Ficino can peacefully affirm that "the difference between Plato and Dionysius is only a matter of words, rather than opinion."¹² The entire European Renaissance is a global process of inculturation of Greek ideas into the Christian worldview. The same Ficino, incidentally, shows this trend at inculturation when he presents the "Christian" seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (of a peculiar biblical origin¹³) as gifts of the seven planets.¹⁴

I am neither assuming that praxis has to follow theory (so that we have to "inculturate" because we are theoretically convinced of having to do so), nor that theory has to be subservient of praxis (so that we defend theoretically something that has already taken place). The relationship between the two is dialogical, not dialectical. I am simply remarking that many movements today are spontaneous outcomes of a new spirit among the peoples of the world. And I say that inculturation today, as the act of consciously adopting foreign symbols of all types, demands a thorough theological justification.

Now, this justification needs to be double. It must be carried out from the point of view of Christian theology, and it has also to be sought in a corresponding Hindū theology, if we take the case of Hinduism as typical. And it *is* typical, because Christianity has received little *intellectual* challenge from tribal and animistic religions until now. In a colonial regime, the so-called great religions of Asia may not have the freedom of voicing metaphysical objections. I insist on this because we should be acutely aware that the situation is relatively new. Today, we cannot take the "right" of inculturation for granted. The justification has to come from both sides. It needs dialogue.¹⁵

This requires a creative hermeneutics, because the justification we are looking for demands a change in the self-understanding of the traditions concerned. For the sake of brevity, an example may here suffice: Christian *āśramas* adopting traditional Hindū rituals and indigenous sacred architecture. It may very well be that a student of Ānanda Coomaraswamy finds striking similarities between the *śilpa-śāstras* and traditional Western Christian patterns; and that *regnum* and *sacerdotium* are proper to both the ancient Hindū customs and to the medieval Christian practices.¹⁶ It may still well be, for instance, that some Christian monks in India, having felt the inner urge of the *saṃnyāsa* ideal, are prompted to follow that path

¹² *De amore* VI.3 (trans. S. Jayne, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* [Dallas: Spring, 1985]).

¹³ See Isa 11:2–3.

¹⁴ *De amore* VI.4 (cf. *Ibid.*).

¹⁵ It is significant to note that a contemporary study whose background is Africa, namely A. Shorter's *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), practically overlooks the two-way nature of interculturalization.

¹⁶ See A. K. Coomaraswamy's "Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government," *American Oriental Series* (New Haven) 22 (1942).

and adopt its external signs because they also express their own attitude. What is done spontaneously and with purity of heart has the fragile validity that it does not look for any justification because the felt need does not arise.

But once the reflective consciousness has arisen, and queries and misinterpretations appear, we cannot be satisfied with statements of fact.

I am not saying that a Hindū has a property right on any traditional Hindū ritual, but I am not affirming, either, that a Christian can follow any traditional way of life and worship without being aware of what it means and entails for both communities. How would Christians react if the Hindū temples in the West looked like medieval cathedrals, and the *pūjās* and *yajñas* like Eucharistic liturgies?

What I am saying is this: the first generations of Christians were not confronted with this problem. The situation was different. Christianity was not a "developed" religion. Christians expressed their faith with the cultural categories at their disposal. By means of them, they elaborated a full-fledged self-understanding of the Christian fact. It then crystallized in Christendom as a complete and all-embracing way of life, and later in Christianity as a religion in the modern sense. Our situation is different. First of all, we have a definite self-understanding of Christianity which comes—let us say, roughly—from the Mediterranean cultures. And we have other religious forms in other parts of the world that have come to different conceptions of Reality. The encounter between these traditions requires a common effort of reinterpretation. Otherwise Christians will be prolonging the colonialist syndrome, making inroads of conquest under the garb of inculturation. And this is precisely what some Hindūs suspect.

We could exemplify the problem as follows. If one happens to belong to a traditional Hindū culture—if his or her archetypes, so to speak, come from that tradition, and he or she has also spiritually and intellectually assimilated them—and one happens, at the same time, to be a Christian with a parallel theological formation, when that person is going to express what his or her heart believes, he or she may be prone to use the traditional symbols of Hindū culture rather than those of the Christian one, although tending to fill them with a Christian reinterpretation as far as possible. Such Christians will not feel as if they were using Hinduism for their own purposes, or imitating a foreign model. They will feel loyal to themselves, and perhaps even enhancing both traditions.

This entails, of course, what we hinted at in the previous *sūtra*, namely that doctrines, dogmas, gestures, rituals, and the like are but expressions of the Ineffable (*medium quo*, not *quod*, to put it Scholastically), and traditions are not rigid, unchangeable entities. But that person as an individual may not have the right to speak for an entire community, and not even to adopt certain practices if unjustified scandal flows out of it, be it from the one or the other side. To convert the possibly lethal tensions into creative polarities is the function of the sage.

The introduction of a foreign body triggers a possible triple reaction: rejection, assimilation, or transformation of the foreign body. Broadly speaking, all three reactions may occur in the course of time, often leading to a certain mutual fecundation, but today religions have developed into coherent wholes. Their doctrines are "interrelated," their rituals are linked with their doctrines, and these offer the explanations for their morals. An inculturation going beyond mere external practicess or secondary ideas may "de-stabilize" an organically constituted religion, all the more so if the institutionalization has a theological sanction. The recent warning of the Vatican regarding Oriental ways of meditation, independently of the merits or demerits of the *Letter*, is a case in point.¹⁷ This document fears that a life of prayer

¹⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, 1989.

neglecting the I-you relationship with the divine may destroy the personalistic character of Christian theology and distort the Christic notion of God as Person. And the challenge is really there. Hindū and Buddhist inculturation into Christianity changes Christianity's self-understanding. The question remains whether Christianity is capable or willing to accept such a religious cultural change, and keep its own identity.

8. A Kenotic Christ and a *Śūnyavāda* May Provide a Theological Starting Point for a Hindū-Christian Interculturation

A theological interpretation of the notion of *kenōsis* in the Christian tradition, and a philosophical hermeneutics of the insights of Hindū and Buddhist *śūnyavāda* could offer a meeting ground for a fruitful dialogue on interculturation. The Christian interpretation, to begin with, should not be limited to Neoplatonic and Gnostic readings, nor should the classical Hindū (and Buddhist) interpretations be limited to their canonical sources. The *sadasadanirvācaṇīya* of *vedānta* could be immensely fruitful.¹⁸ A hint from the *sperma mentos* of Proclus¹⁹ could prove of great value, too. To meet in the abyss of emptiness means to overcome—not deny—the sensible and the intelligible sides in our experience of Reality. Philosophically, we could speak of the encounter of Being with Nothingness, or perhaps of Being in Nothingness.²⁰

With reference to the Christian side, I would say only this: we need a *christologia negativa* that is obviously not a *logos* about the *logos*, a "logology." This is not the place to develop this idea of overcoming a *tribal Christology* in a similar way as Judaism overcame its own notion of a tribal God and replaced it with a universal monotheism. This is the Christian theological task of Asia, I dare say! The *christologia negativa* is not a christological vision of a *Pantokrator* similar to YHWH becoming the God of all, not just of Israel. I am contesting the idea of a second covenant as a model for Christian theology for the third millennium in Asia. Perhaps, to understand the *kenotic* Christ in depth, one should overcome not only the category of ultimate substance but also that of linear time and curved space. . . .

There is a long and equally traditional understanding of the meaning of "incarnation" in the sense that the *logos* did truly become flesh, that is, took on not only a particular human nature, but Human Nature as such.²¹ Ἰδοὺ ὁ ἀνθρώπος—*Ecce Homo!* (Jn 19:5). Christ is the Head of the Mystical Body; the acts of Christ have universal repercussions because Christ "is" not only an individual; or, as many councils of the church have stressed on the basis of the concept of Christ as the Second Adam (see 1 Cor 15:22), the whole human and even cosmic nature of the entire universe has been taken on in the act of Christ. *Una Christi humanitas in omnibus hominibus* (Christ's humanness is one in all human beings), says Nicholas of Cusa.²² This in an ancient tradition that we may sum up in a single quotation from Origen: "Christ's body is the entire human race, and even perhaps the whole of creation."²³

¹⁸ The phenomenal world is neither *sat* (being) nor *asat* (non-being) but *anirvācaṇīya*, ineffable, inexplicable, unreachable by *vāc*, the word, the *logos*.

¹⁹ "καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ σπέρματι ἐκείνου τοῦ μὴ ὄντος" [There is in us some seed of this non-being], *In Parmenid.*, VI (1082.10).

²⁰ I can here mention K. Nishida, H. Tanabe, K. Nishitani, and Y. Takeuchi of the Kyoto School, whose works could help enormously to provide intellectual and spiritual tools for such an encounter.

²¹ See A. H. Haas, *Nim din selbes war* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1971), pp. 52–63 and *passim*, for Meister Eckhart's interpretation of the universality of incarnation.

²² *De docta ignorantia* III.12.

²³ *Homilia II in Psalmo XXXVI. I* in PG 12.1330 A. See É. Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ*, 2 vols. (Brussels-Paris: Levanium, 1951).

The kenotic Christ would be the symbol of total emptiness, both from the side of God, for the Deity becomes human, and from the side of Man, for, as more than one council has said, this man is Humanity, and reaches the divinity through the incarnation. Dogmatic theology recognizes two natures in Christ, but *one* divine Person. The human person of Christ is equally *kenotic*. It is this emptiness that makes room for the merging of the Infinite and the finite without separation and confusion (playing with the famous adverbs of the Council of Chalcedon, of course).²⁴

The *kenotic* Christ is more than what a mere exegesis of Philippians 2:7 would suggest, that is, a moral disrobing of a Christ who, being in the form of God (ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ, Phil 2:6) took the form of a slave. We may be allowed to use this passage in an ontological sense according to the spirit of the insights of Oriental philosophies on emptiness. Being ceases to be the supreme or ultimate category, and is flanked by *śūnyatā* and *asat*.

Descending from these *theologoumena*, we may still say what follows. All too often the mystical element of religion has either been relegated to the heights of speculation, as the privileged experience of a selected few, or brushed aside as something irrelevant, maybe even dangerous, but at any rate accidental to religion and to theology—mystical theology being tolerated, if at all, as a specialized discipline. I would affirm, on the contrary, that if we chop off the mystical element, we not only kill religion but make any interreligious dialogue barren and, ultimately, understanding impossible.

The relationship between words and reality is not one of a sheer utilitarian and extrinsic nature. Words belong to the things themselves. But the relationship is not, for that matter, one of pure identity either. Neither nominalism nor realism meet the challenge of human language. Words are not merely signs, but they are not the whole reality either, nor can they be perfect and univocal expressions of it. There is always a space and a time between the two: a space of infinity, and a time of freedom that can only be perceived, surmised, experienced, sensed . . . if we do not neglect that other human power that transcends the intellect without abandoning it, nor leave aside the revelation of the senses—as I have tried to articulate time and again.

9. The Liberation of Man Is the Guiding Principle of Interculturation

Perhaps the most poignant word today for salvation, *soteria*, *mokṣa*, *satori*, *nirvāṇa*, and so on, is liberation. By "salvation" I mean a twofold liberation: *from* oppression (by injustice, sin, *avidyā*, *anṛta*) and *for* fullness (of life, *sat*).

I cite this double notion of liberation because it would not be proper to adopt a merely individualistic and anthropocentric concept of salvation. Man needs to be saved, that is, liberated *from* the grips of oppressive structures of all types and liberated *for* being able to reach salvation—which entails, among other things, to be able to regain the links with tradition, the ancestors, the earth, the heavens, or using Indic expressions, *lokasaṃgraha*, *brahmaloka*, *svarga*, *brahman*, *ātman*, and the like.

In our times, this liberation presents undeniable specific traits.

Interculturation is a normal phenomenon. When two communities live in close contact, mutual influences are inevitable—all the more so when we are facing a common situation. The common situation is not, of course, a concocted common enemy of all religions, as the hysteric movements crusading against Communism, not long ago, maintained. The common situation is what I would call the *terrestrial condition* of our times.

²⁴ Denz.-Schön. 302.

What I am hinting at is this: if the two previous *sūtras* suggested a change in the intellectual and mystical approach, this point emphasizes the urgent need for a liberating praxis, not certainly disconnected from an underlying theory, but not fully dependent on it either.

The world situation nowadays is serious enough, and our consciousness of it should be clear enough so as to make us realize that no interculturalization worth this name can ignore or even dismiss as secondary the plight of the immense majority of our fellow beings—and I would include here the animals, the thousands of vegetable species being yearly eradicated from the earth and prevented from performing their balancing harmony, together with the material earth suffering the onslaught of the technocratic tyranny. Not only the psychical and spiritual but also the physical and biological survival are at stake.

A theology of religious pluralism starting from the crisis of our present cultures cannot shun the challenge of the technocratic civilization, which seems to penetrate all recesses of human and earthly life. The technocratic inculturation is lethal both for the Earth and for humanity. It would be unrealistic, and almost a blatant insult to living religions, if this issue had not been a religious top priority.

I am not saying that the Latin American theology of liberation and the North American ecophilosophy offer the universal crosscultural models (which they do not claim to), nor am I merely defending here an Indic theology of liberation and an *ecosophy* for the Indic subcontinent, important as they may be. I simply stick to my topic of interculturalization when I affirm that liberation *from* oppression of all types and liberation *for* the fulfillment of Man's ultimate goal form the catalyst capable of transforming most of our actions. This paragraph stands precisely against both mere activism and a merely theoretical interpretation of the situation. Both the vision of the problem and the means to its solution are already cross-cultural phenomena.

Let us put the issue from the concrete perspective of Christian inculturation into Hinduism. Why do Christians want to adopt Hindū culture? To convert Hinduism? To enhance Christianity? To feel better about themselves? I submit that these motivations are not the genuine driving force behind the dynamism of the Spirit. I detect a much deeper force impelling the peoples of the world, and the Christian people in our case, to foster this interculturalization. On the one hand, it is the seriousness and communality of the *terrestrial condition*; on the other hand, the conviction that, in isolation, we are today no longer capable of understanding, let alone fulfilling, our human calling. The inspiring force behind interculturalization is, I am convinced, a divine urge prompting us to collaborate in the liberation of Man, the earth, the universe. We may call this liberation *nirvāṇa*, *brahman*, social justice, peace, the glory of God, the salvation of Man, and we may go on discussing the nature of that *mukti*, but a few things emerge. Two-thirds of humanity living on earth are oppressed; animals, plants, and the earth are also being exploited. The "cultivation of Man" has been—since the Chinese philosophers and the Stoics—the major question of all cultures. Perhaps all our religious cultures need today to join their efforts for a worldwide task, which is at the same time human and divine: *cultura mundi*.

I am not necessarily adopting a secular position, giving a certain priority to the historical and spatiotemporal dimensions of reality, precisely because they are endangered today in an alarming manner. One could equally adopt a cosmology that minimizes these dimensions and emphasizes the eternal, transhistorical, and/or otherworldly dimensions. It would remain nevertheless true that, in spite of the fact that human existence is mortal and "we" here on earth do not live the "real" human life, this does not justify our voluntary killing the earthly existence of our fellow humans. In the realm of the most extremist conception of *māyā*,

there are also internal (*māyic*) rules. There may be no ground for despair because the planet blows up. It is nevertheless a human task to respect the *vyāvahārika* as much as to cultivate the *pāramārbhika*. The possible disappearance of life on the planet may not be an ultimate tragedy: it would just be a human tragedy that we could not escape. Our co-responsibility cannot be evaded.

I add the following reflections. By realizing, for a Hindū and a Christian alike, that two-thirds of humanity are poor or oppressed, by realizing that contemporary Man is painfully aware of this terrestrial condition, we discover that the fact of poverty and oppression is both transcultural and transreligious. What is then the culture of interculturalization? The answer here is irritatingly simple: the culture of the poor. And the culture of the poor is the culture of *the people*. And what is this culture? It is the culture of *survival*: to breathe, eat, work, dance, love, walk, speak. . . . It is the culture of the most *elementary* things, and we too easily tend to forget that they are also the most *fundamental* ones. To live or not to live, that is the question!

Not only the technocratic complex of today's pervading civilization is complicated, specialized, fragmentary, and difficult; most theologies of most religions also are baroque and entangled in subtleties. The poor of the gospel are not an economic category; the simplicity of the Hindū ideal is not a sophisticated doctrine; the "middle way" of the Buddha is not a logical conundrum. The interculturalization I envisage is not a new religion or a more complicated theology. It is the very liberation of Man from the power of material and mental entanglements, rescuing the true freedom of human dignity. Interculturalization is a task ahead of us, a new creation, and not a heavier intellectual bureaucracy.

An important addendum is still necessary, lest we forget the two-way movement of interculturalization. In the West, today, there is certain anguish regarding the human predicament. The *kosmology* underlying Indic cultures seems to face the "looming catastrophe" in a more serene way. It is not a question of being callous to human suffering and taking refuge in a world-denying spirituality, because the affirmation that "it" all is unreal is itself unreal. It is not a question, either, of becoming despaired and depressed because we seem impotent. It is a question of envisaging, in a cross-cultural light, the very situation we are in. If we were to follow an oversimplified cliché, we would say that Christians should learn serenity in face of the mortality of the Earth; and Hindūs, a concern for the man-made injustices we all together perpetrate. Interculturalization then ceases to mean inroads of influence of one culture into another. It becomes a common concern, an act of joining hands to face a common situation that requires all of our diversities.

Part Eight

THE DREAM OF AN INDIAN ECCLESIOLOGY¹

The title is purposely ambiguous. In the West, dreams are considered to be expressions of the unconscious, but in India they are seen as manifestations of a higher degree of reality. A dream may indicate an ideal, a utopia, or something that already exists and whose stirrings make people uneasy. A dream may also be a nightmare, the voice of the devil or an angel, the result of wishful thinking or of bad digestion.

At any rate, having dreamed for many years and unable now to retell my dreams, I will simply wake up and attempt to formulate some theses.²

A commentary follows each thesis, but neither explanation nor scientific apparatus is added.³

¹ From G. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology* (Bangalore: ATC, 1984), pp. 24–54.

² I could display scholarship and plague this paper with many footnotes and references, but I will refrain from this attempt to protect myself with *auctoritates*. Any mistake is my own.

³ The self-references are given only as a device for brevity: I refer to my other writings where the thought is further developed.

THEOLOGICAL PREMISES

An ecclesiology that considers the basic problems of peoples of India in the light of Christian faith cannot just take the status quo for granted, but has to equally consider the *status ante* and the *fluxus quo*, that is, the entire situation. In other words, the *locus theologicus* for an Indian ecclesiology today is not only the magisterium or the sociological situation of Christians in India, but a space that encompasses what the church was in the past within or without its traditionally defined borders, and what it will become.

I introduce first of all the theological premises, so as to offer the proper perspective of my dream.

An Indian Theological and Ecclesiological Reflection *Ab Ovo* Is Legitimate and Imperative

In almost every church today, but much more in the churches outside the Western world, a need is felt for adaptation and *aggiornamento* (updating). The old colonial period in world history is collapsing, and in spite of the neocolonialistic attitudes of the technocrats and the dearth of signs of a new order, the old order can certainly not be restored. Whether it will be a postcolonial, posttechnological, or post-Christian order, it remains to be seen. In any case, it will be "postmodern."

In the Christian ecclesiological field, the issue no longer seems to be one of, say, "Indianizing" Roman Catholicism,¹ but of reenacting the incarnational act of Christ in time and space. The question is no longer how to explain the historical status quo, and the problem is not merely one of sociological change; rather, it is entirely a question of a basic *christo-pneumatic* approach, and is ultimately a mystical issue. In other words, the point of departure for a genuine Christian reflection in India on the question of Christian community should not merely be a sociological consideration about the ecclesiological status quo, but a christological reflection, a mystical insight into the nature of the fundamental Christian fact. Now the churches in India face this challenge: whether they have to keep on existing as parasites on the main body of Christianity and of the nation or nations, or instead to create a symbiosis that, while not breaking the fundamental unity, may allow the full blossoming of their own potentialities.²

¹ See M. Singleton, "New Forms of Ministry of Africa," in *New Forms of Ministries in Christian Communities*, *Pro Mundi Vita* 50 (1974): 33. The entire dossier of the international colloquium held in Louvain-Heverlee in September 1973 is an important document.

² See my article "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion: A Critical Self-Examination," *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (January 1973): 113-40. Now in Volume VI.2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

The problem of genuinely Indian response to the Christian fact is complex and delicate. We should not overstep intermediate situations and ignore the status quo; we cannot start from a nonexistent point zero. Yet I submit that authentic Christian thinking here cannot simply be reduced to sociohistorical considerations—important as they are—because there is another factor to take into account, namely, the belief in the transtemporal character of the Christian calling. The continuation, or rather reenactment, of the Mystery of Christ on earth is ruled by this belief factor as much as by all the other behavioral components of any human group.

In theological terms, Christian identity does not necessarily mean sociological homogeneity or doctrinal uniformity. Christians in India should be convinced of their right and duty to rethink and reenact the Christian fact, certainly without ignoring twenty centuries of Christian history, but also without forgetting that Christ is alive “yesterday, today and forever,”³ so they are not constrained to repeat, annotate, or simply adopt the creative achievements of their Western brothers: either Greek or barbarian.⁴ . . . If we do not start from the living Christ, who was before Abraham,⁵ who is the Firstborn of all creation,⁶ and the fullness of Reality,⁷ we will betray both the Christian calling and the Indic heritage. If the Christian life in India must have a vitality of its own, and not just one imported from abroad, it has to draw its force both from the universal sunlight and from the native soil of the millenarian Indic cultures.

If the first Christians of heathen origins could abolish circumcision, if the patristic age could formulate the central Christian mystery in Hellenic categories, if the Scholastic period could go so far as to equate God with Being, and if Western modern times have so utterly transformed the Christian self-understanding as to make it a Christian humanism, should we deny India the right to a creative contribution to the crown of *Catholic Church*?⁸

This, then, is background of the theses that follow.

To sum it up: ecclesiology is neither mere sociology nor pure exegesis. It is a creative theological activity that requires an undimmed theological gift.

The Christian Community Faces a Radically New Situation after Twenty Centuries of Existence; the Signs of Mutation Are Recognizable

After four kairological periods of Christian—ecclesial—self-understanding, we face a newly emerging element in the self-consciousness of Christians. The five keywords and corresponding dates are the following:

Witness (until the Arian controversy in the fourth century)

Conversion (until the clash with Islam in the ninth and tenth centuries)

Crusade (until practically the sixteenth century and the discovery of America)

Mission (until the end of political colonialism, twentieth century)

Dialogue (today)

³ Heb 13:8.

⁴ Rom 10:12; Gal 4:28; Col 3:11.

⁵ Jn 8:58.

⁶ Col 1:15.

⁷ Col 1:19.

⁸ The preceding paragraphs are an elaboration of a part of my essay “Social Ministry and Ministry of Word and Worship (Some Considerations from the Asian Background),” in P. S. de Achútegui (ed.), *Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church* (Hong Kong: FABC, 1977), pp. 1–20. Now in Volume III/1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

Contemporary Christian identity needs to find a difficult balance between *witnessing* the fact of Easter, *conversion* of one's own life, *crusade* against evil, *mission* toward the others, and *dialogue* with the world.⁹

If theologians are not aware of the new situation and keep on living in isolated ivory towers, they may simply theologize out of inertia and become frozen supporters of a nonviable tradition. A tradition is alive when it allows itself to be handed down (*tradita*) as a living and thus changing thing, and not as lifeless bundle.

This mutation dawning in the postcolonial era of Christianity amounts to nothing less than a jump outside the Abrahamic tradition, without in any way denying the two-thousand-year-old link with the Mediterranean world and the pedigree of forty or more centuries of Hebrew tradition. If Christianity wants to be embodied in Asia, Africa, and Oceania in a post-colonialist era, if it wants to take the other religious traditions of humanity seriously and on their own terms, it needs to convene what I have termed a Second Council of Jerusalem, and not merely be satisfied with a Vatican III (or Chicago I) or another assembly of the World Council of Churches somewhere in a far corner of the world, but still strictly within the parameters of Western categories. The problems are new, the situations have no precedent, the answers also need to be original.

There Is an Existential Gap between Dogmatic Theology and Ecclesiology; It Is the Abyss between Theory and Praxis

Dogmatic theology, in the classical sense of the word, has slowly begun to face the fact enunciated in Thesis 1. Theology of religions is now seen in a new light. The meaning of catholicity is being reexamined; the old treatises, thoroughly revised. Speculative theologians enjoy great freedom and show intellectual daring. This does not seem to be the case with ecclesiology. As soon as someone just tries to reform the church on this level, he or she faces stiff resistance, if not disciplinary countermeasures.

I assume that one of the main reasons for this is the well-known gulf between theory and praxis, reflected in the tension between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. In fact, theological thinking has relatively little impact on ecclesial praxis. We find here the same syndrome as in modern Western-style democracy: you may *say* what you like best, provided that you *do* what the law requires you to. You have freedom of thought, provided that this thought remains theoretical, that is, without power to eliminate or even viably challenge the System.

Theology says very interesting things on sacraments, liturgy, ministries, and so on, but unless they are reenacted, proved, checked, challenged, and modified in the praxis, all those *theologoumena* remain barren. Now, most bishops, moderators, superiors, parish priests, ministers, or whoever is in charge of the actual structures of ecclesial praxis will not change an inch unless it is ordained from a higher authority; and even then, routine and inertia would often retain their power. Just one example: since Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei*, it is practically unlawful or at least inconsistent for priests to give communion to the faithful with bread that has not been consecrated in the very mass they are celebrating. And yet, in India and elsewhere, people are—more often than not—given Holy Communion with the hosts being kept in the tabernacle.

How can we break the vicious circle of a theory that is not mature until it enters into praxis and a praxis that cannot be changed until there is a proven theory? Ecclesiology is the

⁹ See my "Christianity and World Religions," in *Christianity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), pp. 78–127.

victim here. The Roman Church, to put forth another example, has recognized that wine is not absolutely necessary for the mass by allowing alcoholic priests to use unfermented grape juice. But which priest or bishop will dare change something that, in theory, is recognized as nonessential? I hear so many voices privately saying that wine is foreign to India, but very few dare undertake the necessary steps to change the situation.

Experience shows that it is not enough to change the minds, that is, ideas, in order to change the praxis; and a mere change of structures is equally ineffective on this level. The relationship between theory and praxis is not just dialectical: the Eastern wisdom of *yin* and *yang*, for instance, could shed much light on this thorny problem.

What I am saying here is that the status of ecclesiology is different from that of dogmatic theology. Ecclesiology implies a further factor of praxis, and thus of hierarchy, authority, and law that must not be overlooked.

The theological task in ecclesiology is not a mere theoretical one. It also requires involvement, perhaps protest and confrontation in the field of praxis. Therein lie its risk and its beauty. Here theology recovers its existential status. It requires faith, and what Clement of Alexandria called the courage of life.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In order to furnish some tools of understanding, possibility of discussion, and eventually clarification, I submit the following reflections.

The Concept of Church Entails the Harmonious Combination of Sacrament, Hierarchy, and People

These three dimensions are often considered separately, or rather, one of them gets the upper hand and confusion soon arises. For the sake of convenience, and in order to better stress the inadequacy of such a separation, I will call these three dimensions Church I, Church II, and Church III.

Church I is the mystical concept of church, often called the *ecclesia spiritualis*. It is the *ecclesia sacramentum mundi* (μυστήριον τοῦ κόσμου), the *sine ruga, sine macula, ab initio mundi, ab Abel*. It is the Body of Christ, the invisible and yet temporal kingdom of God on earth; it is that for the sake of which the whole creation has been called to existence and *extra quam nulla salus*; it is the hidden leaven, the Bride of Christ, and so on. We could call it the church of faith.

Church II is the mainly historical concept of the church, the church of Peter, of the apostles and their successors, the church of Constantine, of the fathers and doctors and also of Luther and the theologians. In sum, it is the hierarchical church with its patriarchs, bishops, priests, congregations, institutions, and organizations, the World Council, the patriarchates, the Vatican, and the like. It is the juridical church.

Church III is the predominantly pastoral and also sociological concept of church: the people, the Christian masses, those who receive the message and, to some extent, also carry its burden. The struggles of the faithful, the cries of the prophets, the movements of people, all this is Church III.

These three concepts are merely the three constitutive dimensions of the one church. There is no real church if these three dimensions are not somewhat represented. A mere mystical core is not enough to constitute a church. Yet, equally, hierarchy and people without the first dimension do not make a church, and so forth. One dimension is not enough. The three elements together are needed to constitute the church. To be only Church I is too vague and disembodied. To be sure, there is a mystical union with humankind and with the entire universe. Every Man having reached a certain maturity senses his belonging to Reality, his participation—active and passive—in the destiny of creation. This dimension is essential, but not sufficient.

To be only Church II means to be "the boss"—be it called pastor, overseer,¹ or father—to have responsibility for others, to run an institution, a corporation. Any kind of authority,

¹ That was the original meaning of the Greek word *episkopos*: bishop. [n.d.t.]

hierarchy, or power, if carried out in good conscience, could fulfill the requirements of Church II. The Vatican State is not the church, useful as it might have been, or is. But a Christian institution alone does not make the church.

To be only Church III is to be a group of people, often merely an indiscriminate mass. By itself, it is anarchic, unstructured, without any point of cohesion, center, or direction ahead. It may lack both the transcendence of Church I and the immanence of Church II.

Therefore, to be church, the three elements have to be harmoniously balanced. Church I together with Church II forms an *entelechy* of a few magnates who feel it as a divine calling to lead others. This is one of the pitfalls of the so-called official church, where the people do not matter because of a "divine-right theology" that only comes from above. Thus the malaise of the present situation: a church from above having the people in its power. Yet the people seem to want to get out from under that grip—and to be determined to succeed.

The combination of Church I and Church III characterizes a sect when the group aims at dealing with the ultimate meaning of life; otherwise, it is just a more or less successful corporation. If the universal principle of Church I is lacking, what we have is a few leaders who take hold of a small group of people in the name of some goal, in this case called salvation. This is a sect, necessarily closed, with definite membership rules and clear-cut laws and bylaws. They see themselves as the saviors of the world, as having a unique prophetic role to play, and of course, *extra sectam nulla salus*. This is, in a much deeper sense than the connivance of Churches I and II, the kairological crisis of the Christian church today. So far, the principle of the monopoly of salvation could still be maintained thanks, on the one hand, to the ideology of Christendom, and on the other hand, to the casuistic distinctions of theologians (church *in voto*, invisible church, *bona fides*, anonymous Christians, etc.).

The crisis can only be overcome by inverting the classical statement found in such venerable sources as Mark, Origen, Cyprian, and others.² We could then say that this very statement defines what the church is, that is—as I have tried to explain elsewhere³—the church is, by definition, the place of salvation, so that "wherever salvation takes place, *there* is the church."⁴

This leads us to the conception of church as the *locus* where the dimensions I, II, and III meet in harmony. The traditional idea of the Mystical Body of Christ would be very helpful here.⁵

² See the excursus on the topic in Ch. Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Desclée, 1962); Eng. trans.: *The Church of the Word Incarnate* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966).

³ See R. Panikkar, "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus. Die innere Unzulänglichkeit einer nicht-christlichen Welt," *Neues Abendland* 10(5) (1955): pp. 259–66; and "Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality, the Supernatural," Inaugural Lecture at the Tantar Ecumenical Institute of Advanced Theological Study, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 1–81. Now in Volume III/1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁴ It has been said, as referring to my views, that "the function of Christianity is not to act as one religion among others but to lose its identity altogether and get itself dissolved in other religions and help them to achieve their full identity" (A. Karokaran, *Evangelization and Diakonia* [Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978], p. 207). Without entering here into a defense against that thoughtful and legitimate critique, I may point out only two things. First, that it would better represent my thought if the text said, "church," instead of Christianity. Here I am following the example of Pius XII, who in many drafts of his encyclicals changed the word "Christianity" and the expression "Christian religion" into "Church." This latter, I submit, *qua* religion, is one religion among many. Second, identity is not lost by losing differentiation, except within the context of a prevalently Semitic way of thinking, which understands identity in terms of being different from others. See my *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le Christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), pp. 37–41.

⁵ The works of Émile Mersch should be remembered in this context. See especially the English translation of his *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (1936): *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938).

The Main Ecclesiological Problem Lies Today in Hierarchy (Church II)

We should distinguish between a *mediator*, which shares in the very things to be mediated, and an *intermediary*, which merely serves as a broker who puts the parties concerned into contact. The nature of Church II lies in its mediatory character, and its crisis consists in the danger of its becoming an obsolete intermediary. Too often does Church II seem to lose touch with both Church I, the Mystery, and Church III, the people. Church II is enmeshed in the web of history and has grown opaque to the glaring transparency and abyssal simplicity of Church I. At the same time, it seems to have estranged itself from the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and even spiritual conditions of Church III.

Church II lives in a kind of world of its own, which some would call a limbo. It has institutions and power, but it has estranged many of the very people who still form Church III, and does not reflect or irradiate the *doxa*, the glory of Church I. The church hierarchy needs more and more money in order to subsist (a sign of a lack of vitality: alternative movements, for instance, do not have and do not need huge amounts of money). It speaks a language that people not only find uselessly complex but that they cannot even understand.⁶

The Two Major Events in Ecclesiology Are the Radical Changes Both in the Consciousness of the Mystery (Church I) and of the People (Church III)

Church I, the kingdom of God, the Mystery, in our contemporary theological consciousness is no longer the same as the Christian heaven or religion. "May Your Kingdom come" is no longer interpreted as asking that the whole world may become Christian or Roman Catholic. The world religions have a positive role to play here. They have something valid to say about the nature of the kingdom and the ways leading to it. They can set aside the Christian nomenclature and, by using their own, enter a dialogical dialogue with Christianity. The *Katholike* is not an exclusive club for Christians. The Mystery has many more "mansions"⁷ than traditional Christians imagined. The "sacrament of the universe" has become much richer and more mysterious. Church II can no longer lay exclusive claim to the mystery of salvation.

Church III is not only a pilgrim church that yearns for a celestial Jerusalem. The people—even though ambiguously, and for many irritatingly—called the people of God is not merely nor even mainly walking toward another world. In the consciousness of many people, *secularity* has become sacred, and thus the secular concerns of human life have become truly religious. The secular problems of human existence are seen as indissolubly linked to the ultimate aspirations of human life. Thus the questions of peace, justice, hunger, earth, nation, and so on become part and parcel of the ecclesial concern.

We should carefully distinguish between

- *Secularization*, which is a historical process mainly belonging to the nineteenth century
- *Secularism*, which is an ideology denying transcendence and closed in itself

⁶ The journeys of John Paul II, in spite of the charisma of his person and his goodwill and intentions, are technological and political events arranged with the aid of millions of dollars and the entire machinery of the Church's organization, especially that of groups like Opus Dei. They are not spontaneous popular explosions, but carefully planned manifestations.

⁷ See Jn 14:2.

- *Secularity*, which is the conviction that the *saeculum*, that is, the life span of the actual living being, has a definite status in reality, and is thus also somewhat ultimate. In other words, the matter-space-time triad is not only a transitory entity but it reveals an everlasting character in a *cosmotheandric* vision of reality.

Church II can no longer remain outside and above the secular sphere and proclaim that its concerns are merely with the a-temporal, a-political, incorporeal things, therefore using the "works of mercy" as mere occasions to "save souls."

THE INDIAN SITUATION

The above-mentioned descriptions were not specifically related to India. I shall now focus on an Indian ecclesiology.

The Church in India Has Undergone the Unnatural Experience of Inheriting an Organization, Accepting an Institution, and from There Striving to Convert Itself into an Organism

Let us make the following general distinctions.

An *organism* is born. It is fashioned by the soul or living principle, according to its nature. An organism comes into existence by a fecundation between its parents. It needs health. It is a natural phenomenon. A living being is an organism. It lives by virtue of its soul.

An *institution* is created as a juridical entity, so as to put in order and keep the continuity of a given state of affairs. An institution responds to the human necessity of relying on patterns and requiring structures. It needs laws. It is a cultural phenomenon. Marriage is an institution: it exists by the need of it that is felt by those who accept it.

An *organization* is created by an external will for some definite goal, and is maintained by a definite set of rules. It needs power. It is a political phenomenon. The Tatas in India are an organization, like IBM in the Western world. The organization lives by virtue of its own efficiency and the will of its founder, or his successors.

The church as an organism is the sacramental church; as an institution it is the hierarchy; as an organization, it includes the patriarchates, the Roman Curia, or similar administrations. As history shows, Christianity developed from organism to institution to organization. Since Constantine, these three elements have been considered indispensable, although most theologians today would agree that the present-day church presents an imbalance of these three elements, and that a new harmony should be sought. It could well be a contribution of Indian theology, due to its exposure to Hinduism, to challenge this tripartite division and help Christians build an ecclesial consciousness of a different order. Hinduism, in fact, is an unambiguous example of a sacramental structure with a plurality of loose institutions and merely secondary organizational structures.¹

¹ See my "The Hindü Ecclesial Consciousness: Some Ecclesiological Reflection," *Jeevadharma* 21 (May-June 1974): pp. 199-205.

**A Living Church in India Would Be
the Fruit of the Reenactment of the Transtemporal
Mystery of Incarnation: A Fecundation between
the Spirit and the Indian Matrix**

This thesis flows almost as a corollary of what has already been said. If in Christ everything is a new creation,² the church should be, everywhere and in every time, a new creation. This is the traditional understanding of the church as the continuation of incarnation. Now, incarnation is a transhistorical event. It began—by our time reckoning—at the beginning of creation; it manifested itself in the historical event of Jesus, and continues unfolding, renewing itself, and being reenacted in space and time in the hearts of the believers and within cultures and religions. Thus the Christic event is an ever-recurring, transhistorical experience. Tradition understood the meaning of the Eucharist in this sense.³

We should not belittle history, yet not fall prey to theological historicism either. Human reality is richer than historical reality. This insight is one of the most important contributions of the East to present-day consciousness.⁴

Furthermore, the past is not, not even for ecclesiology, a paradigm for the future. The past is one pillar of the future, but not its pattern or its total cause. We cannot abolish the past: historical facts remain. Jesus was the son of Mary and, for that matter, a Jew of the first century. The Synagogue has a more fundamental role to play in the Christian church than the *agora* of Athens. But all cannot remain confined to Hebrew, Greek, Mediterranean, or present-day Western categories. History itself is not finished. History has a certain normative character, but so have experience and culture and human consciousness, as Christian history itself has shown.

I am not saying that no fecundation between Christianity and India has ever taken place. It did, and it has Hindūized Indian Christianity; it has Christianized traditional Hinduism and has even had an impact on the Hindū-Muslim struggle; it has given identity and strength to the Malabar churches, and so on. But I am affirming that what has gone on in the past is not enough for the present. Besides, neither more adaptation nor inculturation will meet the challenge of the present-day mutation in human consciousness. It is not up to me nor to anyone, for that matter, to supply a blueprint of what is going to happen—for “I know no man”⁵ and it all sounds so unfeasible. Yet we may well hear the same response that “nothing, no thing, *res, rhema*, word, *vāc* . . . is impossible to God.”⁶ This is collegiality, that is, ecclesiology *in actu*, at work. Only together—not just in a ghetto or withdrawn into a compound mentality—may we be able to follow the Spirit. And “together” does not only mean Christians.

Now, a living organism is built by its living principle: like the Thomistic *materia* (matter) is shaped by its *forma*, or the body is formed by the soul that in-forms it. The church has to be a natural child of this country and not merely an adopted baby, as however it already happens in the Roman Curia with the division between Propaganda Fide and the other offices for the rest of the Catholic people.

² 2 Cor 5:17.

³ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Eglise* (Paris: Aubier, 1954); F. Holböck and Th. Sartory (eds.), *Mysterium Kirche*, 2 vols. (Salzburg: Müller, 1962); and especially K. Rahner, *Symbol der Kirche* (Salzburg: Müller, 1964). These and many other studies came after Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis*.

⁴ See my “The End of History: The Threefold Structure of Human Time-Consciousness,” in Th. M. King and J. F. Salmon (eds.), *Teilhard and the Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 83–141.

⁵ Lk 1:34.

⁶ Lk 1:37.

The growth of the Indian Church must occur, like any healthy growth, from within. Foreign aid is lethal. I say *from within*, not exclusively *from below*. All our theologizing, and even "conscientizing" soars well above the heads of the average Indians and Christians. But I insist that it will have to be predominantly from below—and thus the theological role would be much more one of listening, helping, and learning, than just guiding and teaching. We should here take the work of the "grassroots communities" (as I suggest we should translate *comunidades de base* into English) into account. It is also from within that the Spirit speaks. The main theological task may be a hermeneutic one: a theologian has to interpret the "signs of the times."

The Church in India May Immediately Build Its Own Identity in Two Fields: The Religious and the Social

The Religious Field

The church could—should, in my opinion—collaborate on all levels in the ongoing process of the inner transformation of the traditional religions of India.

"All levels"—without excluding the truly religious level. There is no deep human communication without a *communicatio in sacris*. This *communicatio* should be avoided only if undertaken at the price of one's own apostasy and causes undue scandal. But, after making clear that Christian worship is in spirit and in truth and is not bound to Garizim or Jerusalem,⁷ nor to any form of idolatry, the Christian church could begin to take seriously the injunction of being salt⁸ and leaven.⁹ The salt is there to enhance the respective tastes, not to make everything salt, or even salty. Too much salt is not proper. Christians, as in the first generations, should share the same lifestyle of the people around them, without becoming a separated caste, and without propagating what to India is an alien and inapplicable separation between the cultural and religious fact. In India, everything is both at the same time.

I mean the *inner* transformation of the person and the society, not the alienation that a mere switching to Christianity would cause. It is not a matter of proselytizing, but of witnessing, inspiring, contributing. Christianity is called upon to collaborate in this process of growth, purification, and inner transformation of the traditional life forms in India, worship included. If the traditional religions of India want to survive the impact with modernity, they will have to evolve and undergo an often painful process of inner transformation. Christians with their collective experience of the last two centuries of modernization, at least among the elites, should not take the lead, but participate. This is what the love of our neighbor actually means. Traditional religions will have to undergo basic changes if they want to perform the authentic religious function of being the ways for human liberation. Christians have a role to play here, which is not one of increasing their ranks, but of laying down their life for their friends.¹⁰ How this may be practically feasible, it will depend on many factors, but here I may offer some hints.¹¹

⁷ See Jn 4:21–23.

⁸ Mt 5:13.

⁹ Mt 13:33.

¹⁰ See Jn 15:13.

¹¹ We should just keep in mind that India has 120 million pariahs, of whom 90 million were and are untouchables. Over 50 percent of the population of Karnataka (30 million inhabitants in 1980) is made up of untouchables. Andhra (43 million) has 9 million untouchables. The *ādivāsī* make up some 7 percent of the population (see *The Hindū*, December 30, 1982). See D. von der Weid and G. Poitevin, *Roots of a Peasant Movement* (Pune: Shubhada-Sarawat, 1981), and also V. T. Rajshekar Shetty, *Dalit*

1. India is not *one* nation; it is not even one religion, understood as cult, religious tradition, or *sampradāya*. But India—and I would say Greater India—is a cultural unity. Here culture includes religion as *dharmic* consciousness, *karmic* acceptance, and recognition of the sacred, in spite of the many interpretations of these words. The Christian ecclesial consciousness should begin to acquire a sense of the “people”—the Indian people, the people of this vast subcontinent, irrespective of nation, caste, clan, and even religion. People means *humanness*.

2. India has popular celebrations of the most variegated origins. It needs a *theology of celebration* that, in the horizon of the twenty-first century, may disentangle it from the copyright mentality of obsolete ideologies. In fact, the common sense of the people rejoices at Di(pa)vali, Muharram, and Christmas in a deeper way than a more or less sectarian explanation would make us believe.¹² Something similar could be said regarding pilgrimages, village feasts, and domestic rituals.

3. Joint ventures should be established in the field of theological and philosophical cooperation, without however restricting them to mutual dialogues, important as these may be, especially as first steps for reaching mutual confidence and better knowledge of one another. We still depend too much on hearsay and secondary sources reporting on other people's beliefs and religious practices.

4. As for Christian formation in parishes, convents, seminaries, and schools, it may be an urgent task to revise and eventually reform the information, knowledge, and evaluation of other religious traditions. As long as other religions are considered the works of the devil or sheer products of human nature, against the exclusively divine character of the Christian revelation, there is not much hope that the above-mentioned suggestions will be adopted.

5. If Christianity is merely an already crystallized religion, so is Christian worship, as the latter is inextricably linked to the Mediterranean fauna, flora, climate, and seasons. If, on the other hand, the church is really what it claims to be, a catholic *liturgy* (literally: action of the people) should be provided—which, paradoxically enough, would also mean a more autochthonous and local one. I am not for imitation; I am for incarnation. The question of sacred Scriptures and other religious practices within Christian liturgy are vexing questions that nevertheless must be tackled again.¹³

The Social Field

The church could—and should—participate *sincerely* in the struggle of the people of India for a more humane, and thus more divine life.

“Sincerely” means that the collaboration should be undertaken with no further aims or secret agendas (even if sometimes these go under the name of “supernatural”). Social work is

Movement in Karnataka (Bangalore: CISRS, 1978). On the other hand, India has 2 million scientists (*The Hindū*, December 1, 1982) and 20 million handicapped persons (*The Hindū*, January 30, 1983).

¹² See the treasures of the Vedas as depicted for *Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration*, the subtitle of my book *The Vedic Experience* (Pondicherry: All India Books, 1983). Now Volume IV.1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹³ See the voluminous study edited by D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures* (Bangalore: NBCLC, n.d.), reporting the papers and proceedings of a seminar held in 1974. Useful materials can also be found in D. S. Amalorpavadass (ed.), *Ministries in the Church in India* (New Delhi: CBCI, n.d.), reporting the papers and findings of the Research Seminar and Pastoral Consultation of the Indian Catholic Church in 1976. Another important work by P. Puthanangady has been published meanwhile: *Sharing Worship: Communicatio in sacris* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1988), supporting our views.

an end in itself, and not just a means for something else. The affairs of the city of Man are not irrelevant to those of the city of God. In fact, there are not *two* cities, nor has the Christian a split loyalty or double citizenship.

Sacred secularity, to which the Christian subscribes by virtue of the central dogma of incarnation, turns the very city of Man into the dwelling of God: "And he planted his tent among us,"¹⁴ not as a joke—that is, not as an ephemeral event or a divine caprice—but as the proper *locus* of the divinity. This is what is meant by "the fullness of time."¹⁵

I am not speaking of the individual or private collaboration of Christians in the several activities that may be asked of them, or in which they may feel inclined to cooperate. I am referring to those same activities, but performed by a *community* as such, that calls itself the Christian church. I think this collective activity deserves top priority, before liturgy, formal preaching, running the existing institutions, or whatever. If you are about to celebrate the highest religious act toward God, and you suddenly realize that your brother or sister has a grudge against you, remember that the mystery of reconciliation has absolute priority.¹⁶ And there *are* grudges against the Christian church, from within and without—the main one caused by the more or less tranquil coexistence of the church with an intrinsically unjust ultimate order, and its refusal to proclaim a radical "no" to this system. In traditional language, this was the meaning of the word "world," that world for which Christ even refused to pray.¹⁷

It is no excuse to invoke a lesser evil, or to reply that we do not have a working alternative that would replace the present-day pan-economic ideology and the liberal or state capitalism. The burning question does not belong on the level of theory but of praxis. And Christian tradition, from the times of old, has remarked that Christ on earth first began to *do* and then to teach.¹⁸

Let me explain. We often talk glibly about the fact that half the population of India—that is, more than the whole of Europe and twice as large as North America—lives "below the poverty line."¹⁹ This is a euphemism for saying that they live in subhuman (and sub-animal, if we consider the way animals are taken care of in the first world) conditions. I speak of an unjust sociopolitical order that must be denounced: this awareness stems from the conscientization brought about by secular consciousness. The life of these people is literally hell. This is hell, damnation. They don't live a human life. This has nothing to do with traditional simplicity and with the poor lifestyle in the old Indian villages.²⁰

Misery is not just poverty; misery is the loss of human dignity. It is not just moral deprivation, but human degradation. There is no point in romanticizing here. The mentality of many has become a mere slave mentality; they have been reduced to things, and if you show them love, they don't react—they may even blame you for what you have done. Having lost the sense of being persons, they become "things" with a peculiar type of consciousness that is neither

¹⁴ Jn 1:14.

¹⁵ See Gal 4:4.

¹⁶ See Mt 5:23–24.

¹⁷ See Jn 17: 9.

¹⁸ Acts 1:1.

¹⁹ Three hundred million Indians live in such conditions. Only 80 million are adequately fed, clothed, and housed. The rich comprise 13 million people; 300 million are the poor, and other 300 million the miserable. Actually, India in 1983 had already reached a population of 730 million people, according to *Le Monde*, reported by *The Hindü*, December 24, 1983. And the situation was even worse in 1992.

²⁰ "40% of the rural poor and 50% of the urban poor live below the poverty line both in term of calories and quality of nutrition," as of 1960 (S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1977], p. 33). Today, of course, the situation has worsened.

human nor animal. All sense of gratitude is lost. "Human injustice—wrote Simone Weil, who had a direct experience of it—does not generally produce martyrs, but quasi-damned."²¹ For these people—these people, not their children, who may not even be considered "normal" or fit for any new humanity of the future—for these real people of today there is no redemption, no salvation. They are damned. And we—not God, who in this context remains problematic and only hypothetical—have all contributed to the damnation.²²

If the eradication of this injustice is not a religious and a Christian task, I don't know what we mean by those words.

I would add still another thing. Compared with the above issues, and with those concerning the dignity of the human person, all other theories about heaven, eternal life, *karman*, rebirth, celestial reward, and so on, are just speculation, academic discussions, if not the criminal sedatives for our own conscience and opium for the people. Thank God, I would add, some of those people (not many, among the underdogs) still believe in an "afterlife," and this may really save them. But it is simply a crime on our part to take advantage of those fading beliefs in order to console ourselves and preserve the status quo.

One often hears that the problems are so overwhelming that any action is paralyzed. The individual is a grain of sand on the beach, and the Indian situation is part of an unjust world system.²³ This is why the church must join hands with any other agency sensitive to these problems and not try to solve this predicament alone.²⁴

Collaboration with all the agencies committed in such a praxis—even if the ideological interpretations and psychological or subjective motivations may differ—is today a human imperative. It is the taboo mentality of not wanting to mix, intermingle, or work together with those who are not "pure" that must be abolished: it is certainly not evangelical. I repeat that I am not referring to individual collaboration, but to a collective and ecclesial one. It betrays lack of faith, human weakness, and insulting distrust of the other to retort in objection that, if Christians were to do this, they would be carried away by the others and become atheists, communists, Hindūs, Marxists, or whatever—besides the fact that Christian identity is not based on differentiation and separation, but on identity and communion.²⁵ So, there may not be any incompatibility between Christianity and all those other denominations. I know very well, on the other hand, that the taboo mentality and the worries about purity are endemic in Indian society.

²¹ *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris, 1948), pp. 31–32. She remarks, "La vie sans forme. Survivre est là l'unique attachement. C'est là que commence l'extrême malheur, quand tous les attachements sont remplacés par celui de survivre. L'attachement apparaît là à nu. Sans autre objet que soi-même. Enfer." The whole chapter is worth meditating on.

²² About 12 percent of India's population owns about 60 percent of the urban and rural property—and consume over 35 percent of all the resources. Seventy percent of India's population are undernourished. Some half a million children die annually due to malnutrition. Some 60 percent of the children of the country (between the ages of three and five) suffer from some form or another of stunted growth. Data from the seminar "The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society," Bangalore, October 19–24, 1981, published by the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Center of Bangalore.

²³ Twenty-five percent of the world population consumes 88 percent of the world-produced wealth. This means that three-quarters of the world has less than one-eighth of the total resources at their disposal.

²⁴ See the prophetic book by R. Dumont and B. Rosier, *Nous allons à la famine* (Paris: Seuil, 1966). Beside the physically, psychologically, and spiritually crippling effects of chronic hunger, we should remember that in our times the *main* source of death is deficient nutrition.

²⁵ See R. Panikkar, "On Christian Identity: Who Is a Christian?" in C. Cornille (ed.), *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002). Now in Volume III/2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

Present-day India uses the following beautiful word in a pejorative sense: "communal." The Christian community should not be "communal" but really "catholic."

Now, this collaboration should not be considered as a lesser evil (because "we" would do it deeper and better "on our own") or as a political move (because "we" cannot do otherwise, and it pays to show that we are working for the nation). This kind of collaboration flows directly from the very nature of the church. Here we urgently need an Indian ecclesiology to spell it out: church as salt, leaven, living organism, people of goodwill (not merely of good doctrines: orthopraxis has a primacy over orthodoxy).

I should now put forth examples of *āśramas*, *saṁnyāsīn*, people's groups, political parties, resistance groups, and Hindū-Marxist, Marxist-Muslim movements, showing that they explicitly agree on a fair cooperation.²⁶ I must immediately add that difficulties arise not only among Christians . . . but someone will have to take the first step! These swift references can be enough for now.

In this social field, the church has still another function.

One of the clearest functions of the church is to educate to a *continual protest*, in case. We often do not know what is right and what we should do; but, more often than not, we well know what is wrong and what we should not do. We may not know what is the just order in a society or in a given context, but we know that exploitation by moneylenders, extortion through intermediaries, calumny, and murderous lies are wrong, and that we should not submit to injustice. It is a sin of omission to keep quiet, or to cover, ignore, or postpone, when the Christian community should shout, act, study, take a stance, and put ideas into practice. I would not call this "prophetic protest," but practical and effective protest. The pontifical encyclicals, for instance, are full of the most daring ideas against armaments, capitalism, the abuses of private property, the exploitation by the rich, and so on. And yet the prophetic voice there remains almost barren, because there is neither action nor example behind it. Protest triggers action, and once this is set rolling, it may not reach the goal, but at least it would make coward collusions impossible.

Finally, another task seems important and pertinent here.

It is *popularization*, in the sense of a *decentralization* (about which, more later) and *declericalization*. Much has been written on the subject. The church is the people and not merely the officials, therefore all the institutions of the church should truly *belong* to the people. Here I see a possible prophetic gesture, which would not abolish private property altogether but convert it into a more humane reality.²⁷ It is this: to transfer the church's

²⁶ See R. Panikkar, "Christians and So-Called 'Non-Christians,'" *Cross-Currents* 22(3) (1972): 281-308. Now in Volume III/1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

²⁷ See a single quotation from Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, which covers a wide field: "Certain concepts have somehow arisen out of these new conditions and insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These concepts present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, having no limits nor concomitant social obligations. . . . Such improper manipulations of economic forces can never be condemned enough; let it be said once again that economics is supposed to be in the service of man" (26). See the enlightening article, and comments, by S. L. Parmar, "A Third-World Perspective on the International Economic Order and the Role of the Transnational Corporation in It," *Religion and Society* 28 (June 12, 1982): pp. 46-67. He gives these figures: 98 percent of all research and development worldwide, 91 percent of all exports, and 85 percent of all armaments are in the hands of 30 percent of the world's population, i.e., the industrialized countries (which, according to my data, just meant 25 percent in 1983). This one-quarter of the world consumes 94 percent of all aluminium, 94 percent of all copper, 78 percent of all fertilizers, and above all, 87 percent of the world's energy (which matches the figures I already gave).

properties (especially those of the institutions proper) to the people, and create a collegial board presided over by the bishop.

Here is the place to stress the ecclesial importance of grassroots communities. We should perhaps invert our perspective here and, in doing so, recover the most primitive ecclesial self-understanding. Grassroots communities do not merely represent a more or less disputable movement in the church, closer to the present-day needs of some Christian populations. The grassroots communities *are* the church. They may not be the whole church, geographically or sociologically, but they nevertheless represent the real church. Their virtues and defects, along with their more or less disputable "laws," are those of the church. The *consensus fidelium* is not the historical and respectable *depositum fidei* but the actual feeling and beliefs of the Christian communities.

Here also we need a new ecclesiology. A grassroots community is the living, real, concrete, and thus small human community brought together by the presence of Christ—around the altar, one could traditionally interpret—drawing from this very presence of the Lord the inspiration for their lives. They are the church in communion, which may include protest and polarity toward the other churches in the world. They reenact the Eucharistic Mystery. For exactly as there is one Eucharist (one Eucharistic Christ), and yet many Eucharists, there are many such churches, and yet only one church. They are not merely a *part* of the church—one Eucharistic consecrated bread is not just a part of Christ, it is the whole of Christ, the same way as they are the whole church. So, for instance, the so-called universal church, the Church of Rome, should not be a superstructure reserving for itself the name and functions of the church, but simply the meeting place of the one multidimensional church that works to keep the *vinculum caritatis*, the bond of love through mutual communication and communion, not through central control and homoformization.

The very origins of the grassroots communities are not only to be seen in the first centuries of Christian history: they are symbolized in the very foundational act of the church, according to tradition: Pentecost. There the Spirit did not speak one single language, did not use any sacred language or refined translation of a liturgical text, but spoke the innumerable dialects of the people. Their unity was not Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek, Latin, or out of some Revised Version, but it was rooted in the Meaning behind the words they uttered.

One of the greatest difficulties in ecclesiology today—still an heir of the Enlightenment—is its felt need for a single universal language, even while allowing translations. I am no longer speaking of the problem of one particular language: Latin, English, or whatever. I am speaking of the still inbuilt colonialist belief that the human experience is reducible to a monolithic unity, and that there can be one universal language for all of humanity, be it called technology or canon law. The unity of the church—represented by the enormous diversity of the grassroots communities—is not a cultural and therefore linguistic one; nor is it an administrative or jurisdictional one (*dictio unius iuris*), but is a unity in the Spirit, whom we should not grieve by mistrusting Him.²⁸

This very confidence entails conquering one's own freedom (that of the children of God, and of truth) within the existing ecclesial structures and transforming them accordingly. The *martyria*, just for being such, will be the seed of this new era in church history, and the proof that the resurrection is not a "provincial" fact or an event of the past.

So, why should the church be afraid of disappearing? The very fear of becoming irrelevant increases its lack of importance. The destiny of the church in India may well be one of disappearing, as the leaven disappears in the entire mass and lets it swell into a fermented whole.

²⁸ See Eph 4:30.

I would like to linger awhile on this fear that Christian identity would disappear if the church dismantled its separate organizations and melted into the common, noble concerns of the people here now. Let me draw from the Christian experience of the West since the Middle Ages. The independent organizations of the church have contributed to one of the greatest ills of Western society: the separation between religion and life.²⁹

Church and state needed to be separated, but when the church comes to embody the religious values, then the state represents the civil virtues. A painful duality is then created, the results of which we are currently experiencing. The sacred is relegated to "otherworldly" concerns, disembodied and abstract, impotent to enter the stream of the real human concerns in a living way. In spite of all preaching against "Sunday Christians" and the like, the official church, by believing itself to have the monopoly on religion, has weakened and practically killed religious values by severing them from the whole of human sphere. We know the slogan "Christianity, yes—Churchianity, no." If "believers" are only connected with church organizations, the others will be considered as "unbelievers." The rise of modern atheism in the West and in the East is not independent of this severing of the sacred from the secular.

Why could not the Christian community seriously consider that its function today is to fecundate cultures and help them to live according to those values that Christians call "Christian" and others call by different names? Putting it the other way around: the established churches of India—probably most of us—are far from giving witness to any of the evangelical virtues. In the official churches, Christian poverty is virtually nonexistent. Confidence in divine Providence, without worrying about tomorrow, is unthinkable. Christian simplicity has become impossible because of the connivance with modern technology, and so on. I am not saying they should do otherwise. I am only affirming that the field of Christian witness could perhaps be elsewhere: not in the ghetto mentality of an organization, but in the marketplace of the struggle of the peoples.

* * *

The following reflection also belongs to the dream of an Indian ecclesiology.

I spoke of a mutation, and this should be taken seriously. The present time does not merely call for a reform of the church, but for an altogether new conception of church. It has links with the past, obviously, but it is not a mere adaptation of the European scheme since Constantine. Rome, Constantinople, Worms, and place names too innumerable to mention out of church history have had their time. They may still have their role to play, but if we consider the situation of the world today and the radical revelation of Christ at the end of the period of silent centuries,³⁰ we can no longer go on with the internal problems of an *oikoumenê* that once upon a time was the center of the whole world but today has been turned into a provincial suburb.

When the world is on the brink of atomic disaster, when three-fourths of humankind are systematically ignored, when the old cosmologies that served as a kind of protective vault have all practically collapsed, to be a Christian can no longer mean to defend an obsolete historic order and try to keep loyal to the past by betraying the present and ignoring the future. If Abraham did not hesitate to sacrifice his only son, and this was the expression of his faith, why are Christians today not ready to sacrifice their only "mother"? This too would be an expression of that faith that gives life to the world!

²⁹ See my "Non-Dualistic Relation between Religion and Politics," *Religion and Society* 25(3) (1978): pp. 53–63.

³⁰ See Rom 16:25.

The church as the *sacramentum mundi*, as the place of salvation, can in no way be limited, and often not even be likened to the historically visible church today. Loyalty remains, faith is alive, but it does not live on historical remnants, atavistic customs, and degraded and cowardly attitudes, but on that Mystery that has no name because it can take any name that is sincerely invoked by the Children of Man.

It may belong to the Indian genius to approach the ecclesiological problems from a metahistorical and metasociological perspective. It may also be the need of the hour, and the pluralistic situation in India requires such fundamental reflections. From an Indian point of view, the scandal of the church of Christ does not need to be minimized: India has witnessed religions both in their best and their worst times. But it would also be improper to dream of a "pure" church of small groups of "chosen" people. The very idea of a "divine choice" is incomprehensible to the Indian mind. The church is neither the selected nor the chosen ones, but simply the people, the people around the "Son of the People," as we could translate "the Son of Man":³¹ whoever strives for peace, love, salvation, and justice, guided by what Christians and others may call divine grace, although this is not its only name.

To put it another way, the church seems today to be suffering from the same ideology that is throwing the peoples of the earth into irreparable disaster: nationalism. Its symptoms are clear: defense, national security, maintenance of "our" usual (mental, economic, external, . . .) habits, mistrust of the others by seeing them as a threat, an enemy, and thus protecting one's own identity by military, that is, violent means. I am not speaking, of course, of legitimate "national churches." I am referring to the nationalistic ideology. The most we can manage is "peaceful coexistence," meaning by this a hypocritical tolerance as long as the other does not interfere or is not too strong against our influence. One may call it dialogue, like a diplomatic conference for disarmament or "international aid." Better this than nothing; better the dialogue with other religions than an utter lack of communication or a straight condemnation. But this is not my dream for the church, nor is it going to contribute to that fullness of human life of which the Gospels speak, and that is the ultimate aspiration of any creature.

Just as the nationalistic ideology is harmful and, in my opinion, obsolete, church nationalism is equally no longer justifiable. Self-identity as people does not mean differentiation as nation-states. We need radically new categories. Christianity is a religion, but the Church is not. We have made things complicated. The kingdom of God does not come with fanfare, nor with recognition signs. "It cannot be observed."³² You cannot tell where it is or when it comes, even by careful watching and thoughtful analysis. You cannot locate it here or there, "for the kingdom of God is *between* you."³³ It is this personal relationship—which can only be a loving one, if it has to be really personal—that makes the church: "There where two or three meet in my name, I will be there with them."³⁴

To be sure, the famous sentence by Alfred Loisy—"Christ preached the Kingdom, and the church has come instead"—has to be criticized and qualified. My point now is not a

³¹ The expression "Son of Man" is mentioned seventy times in the Gospels. It is a literal translation of *ben 'adam* or *bar 'enosh*, and refers to Dan 7:13–24.

³² Lk 17:20.

³³ See Lk 17:20–21. This discussion is not the place to examine the rich connotations of the word *parateresis* and the verb *paratereso* [to observe]. It transcends both intellectual scrutiny (cf. Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21) and legalistic mentality. Nor does one need to stress here that the famous *entos* means not only "among" or "within"—i.e., a sociological gathering or an individualistic, isolated interiority—but the "in-between" created by a personal and loving relationship.

³⁴ Mt 18:20.

historical, but a theological one. If the church is not the seed of the kingdom, the *locus* of the Kingdom, it betrays its only *raison d'être*.

Nations, as the natural tribes of people, do not need armies. Equally, the church does not need any *militia*, either to conquer the "outsiders" or to maintain "law and order." It is the most traditional thesis to affirm that the cohesive force of the church, its very living principle, is the Holy Spirit.³⁵

³⁵ See Denz.-Schön, 3807-8.

Part Nine

INDIC THEOLOGY

*A Theological Mutation**

* From M. Amaladoss, T. K. John, and G. Gispert-Sauch (eds.), *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore: TPI, 1981), pp. 23-42.

INTRODUCTION

*"Theology Is Not in Bondage"*¹

This study is a reflection on the nature of Christian theology. Theology is, among other things, an activity of the human spirit. As a human activity, the nature of theology will have to be studied by an analysis of authentic theologizing. Theology is *intellectus fidei*, an "understanding of faith," according to a traditional definition. But to "understand" is an act, and "faith" is a given existential. The act of faith is the existential act of the human being open to the total Mystery and reacting to it. Theology is the search for an understanding of this mystery existentially disclosed in the act of faith. It is on this act of faith, as experienced in India today, that I would like to submit the following considerations.

By way of introduction, I may comment on the particular manner in which I have translated the words of St. Paul above. The setting is well known: he is suffering to the extent of being in bonds. But "the word of God," he adds, "is not bound." Now, theology is not so much the words of Men about God as the word of God (about himself or about whatever He pleases) being received, listened to and understood by Men. Theology is not gossip but dialogue. The *logos* of "theo-logy" is not so much our *logos* as God's *logos* in interaction with our own. In saying "of God," we have not primarily an objective genitive but a subjective one. Theologizing is the listening to this word of God. But this word is not a magic utterance. The old Scholastics distinguished between the Word of God crystallized in Nature, the Word of God enshrined in the human locutions, and the Word of God coming down to us through the prophets and made flesh (and not just doctrine) in his Son. We have to listen to, decipher, understand, and finally realize those words. This is also the function of theology according to the most ancient of the Vedic traditions: the reception of the Word is the task of the *brahmajñānins*, and the realization of the word is *mokṣa*, liberation.

¹ See 2 Tim 2:9.

THEOLOGY IN INDIA

To be sure, *intellectus fidei* cannot be disconnected from *auditus fidei* (see Rom 10:17). The *logos* of God can only be received and understood in and by our *logos*. This "audition" is fourfold: to perceive the sound, to understand its contents, to discover the speaker, and to realize that I am the person being spoken to. The integral word has four dimensions: the speaker (the source, the "I"), the spoken-to (Man, the "you"), the spoken-of (contents, meaning), and the spoken-with (language, sound, matter). Theology tries to discover the harmony of these four elements, the tune of the full *logos*. We listen to the entire word, and we try to realize it as much as we can. A whole word speaks to our senses, to our minds, and to our hearts, and by so doing it reintegrates us into the full *logos* that was in the beginning.

Now, certainly we cannot begin *ab ovo*: theology is neither a private affair of the individual nor a totally brand-new business in each time and place. There is continuity and contiguity. We may recall the *Nirukta* definition of ancient lore (*purāṇa*): "to make new what is old." There is a corporate and historical character inherent in the theological activity. Theology is ecclesial (*saṃghic*) and traditional (*āgamic*), that is, it is the expression of the sense of a people (*sensus ecclesiae*) that receives and hands down its insights (tradition), assimilating and transforming them in the operation. Theology is the ultimate and consecrated wisdom of a culture, a people, or a religion. In other words, twentieth-century India cannot theologize as if from a zero hour and a "center" of the universe. Or, as one text says, "It is from the old ones that the *ṛṣis* create each time the sacrifice anew."¹

And yet this double element of any genuine theological activity, namely the ecclesial and the historical character, should in no way obscure the two other elements, namely the personal and the autochthonous character of any authentic theologizing. We have not just to repeat what our elders have said or thought, and pass it on to the following generations. Theology is not a water that flows in a river; it is rather like water that falls on fertile soil and goes back up to the clouds after producing green pastures and leafy forests. Theological activity is not the solution of a puzzle, the furnishing of a commentary, or the stressing of a perspective. Even those who would defend theology as mere exegesis of a word of God, spoken once and forever, have to resort to *creative* hermeneutics, because even "pure" interpretation never reflects the spoken word without the refractions of that word in the spoken person.

Any interpretation, by the very fact of being such, is already a blend between the given word and the receiving mind. An "objective" word without a "subjective" resonance would not be a real word; the echo belongs to the sound, and although they should not be confused, we should not fail to hear the echo in the very sound we hear. Each receiver has a specific resonance. The theological enterprise is far from being what Germans call *Konklusionentheologie*, a kind of drawing conclusions from dogmatic propositions, arranging applications for the particular

¹ *GopB*, I.5.25.

situations of a person or a community. "The word of God is not bound," not even bound to *one* history or to a particular place. Even for those who do not believe that the Mystery speaks many languages² and would like to stress instead that God has spoken only once, this "having spoken" has to have a transhistorical character and be somewhat contemporary, if it has to be received and understood. An unheard word is not a word, in the same way that an unspoken one is not a word either. There is no word without a speaker, but there is equally no word without a hearer: it would be an idea or an abstract entity, perhaps, but not a *word*.

We could sum up the different opinions regarding the very nature of Christian theology in two extreme hypotheses, a conservative and a liberal one. My thesis claims to be valid in either case.

1. The conservative hypothesis will tell us that Christian theology has an *a priori* in the Christian belief; that this belief is not negotiable (for it is a gift of God); and that the source of theologizing has to be this Christian belief, discarding, at this ultimate level, any other possible or debatable source of theological reflection. Theologizing in India would then be the intellectual effort at understanding the Christian kerygma in the context of present-day Indian culture and religions.

2. The liberal hypothesis qualifies the conservative position that the ultimate Christian commitment is to truth by adding that this truth cannot be said *a priori* to exist only in the so-called Christian starting point or Christian belief. Even more, it will assert that faith does not primarily regard contents, but that it is an attitude of openness and loyalty to all the possible sources of truth. In other words—to use traditional language, which in this case should be conveniently modified—faith is a listening to all possible words that are ultimately spoken by God.

However wide the divergences between these two hypotheses may be, they have one thing in common, which is enough for our purpose: both affirm that we have to start from a position of faith. Understanding belief as the intellectual articulation of faith, we can formulate their main difference by saying that, whereas the latter defends a "naked" or primordial faith, not essentially committed to any belief, the former maintains that there is no faith without an already implicit belief.

We do not need to discuss this important and complex problem here. The starting point in both cases is personal faith, that is, our faith and the faith of the people on behalf of whom we theologize. Here sociology, along with history and tradition, come into play. The function of the theologian is not only that of trying to explain to the young people the faith of the older generations, but also and primarily that of trying to understand the actual faith of young and adult people alike. Theology does not intend primarily to teach, but to understand faith, and in a very special way the faith of those groups that are somewhat "ahead" or more critical in their own self-understanding. The fact that theologians, especially in countries like India, have been mainly engaged in "official" teaching, in explaining a kind of advanced catechism, has contributed to the situation of neglect that the pioneer groups have sometimes felt vis-à-vis their theologians. The first function of the theologian, I would submit, is not to parrot *magisterium*, but to express the latent consciousness of the people of whom they are part, and by this very fact awakening their consciousness. They have to be spokesmen of the faith of the people. It is their effort in rendering faith intelligible that helps to keep it alive and relevant for the lives of their fellow people. This implies an intimate contact with all the issues of an authentic human life, and a theoretical-practical reflection on them so as to provide leadership along with understanding. "Theology is not in bondage."

² See Heb 1:1.

I would venture to formulate in general terms some of the basic convictions of those people in India that represent the new signs of our times.

For decades, to say the least, a considerable part of Christians all around the world have been exposed to an erosion of traditional beliefs. But I will concentrate on India. In more or less subtle ways, Indian Christians have been exposed to Hindū, Muslim, modern, Marxist, secular, profane, and other types of ideas that *prima facie* do not tally with what they have learned in their catechisms. They have difficulty in accepting that most non-Christians go to hell, that Hinduism is a false religion, that celibacy or the "religious" state is the best form of life, that the virginal birth of Jesus is a cornerstone of Catholic faith, and so forth. This is the sociological component: a shift in basic symbols. We may look for the reasons of such erosion in the new perspective created by the independence of India, the Marxist influence in the universities, the crisis of the caste system, the mingling with other peoples, the scientific mentality, the impact of technology, the "spirit of the time," and so on. In a word, the intrinsic historicity of theology requires the constant renewal of the theologizing activity.

The average theologian himself—or herself, I wish I could also say—has probably solved all those difficulties mentioned. Yet, when he preaches, he is reminded that he has to be very "careful," lest he scandalize. But let us also examine the beliefs of the theologian himself, and not just those of other people. And it is in his heart that he will find the unconscious archetypes of his own ethnic group and culture.

Many Indian theologians will begin to wonder whether *karman* is so wrong, after all; whether the transmigration of souls may have a certain value; whether the concept of *mokṣa* may perhaps be more convincing than heaven or the beatific vision; whether Advaita may be a truer intuition than that of a practical, current, Christian dualism. Perhaps a theology of *Īśvara* may strengthen and reform a certain Scholastic Christology. There may be other "inspired" Scriptures. Each religion is unique, and so on. I may note, in passing, a telling example: many Korean Christians have recently become Buddhist monks. And why have they? The strikingly unanimous answer³ was the discovery of the convincing power of the law of *karman*.

What I wish to say is this: the *fides quaerens intellectum*, in any authentic theologizing for people of this sort (and I venture to say they are legion), does not put aside what all these and many other *quaestiones disputandae* or *disputatae* mean, while constructing a "solid" body of doctrine along "traditional" lines. Theologizing is not a merely intellectual exercise trying to make sense of past doctrines in a different context, but a soul-and-heart searching attitude, full of humility, of the spirit of prayer, and of obedience to the many voices the theologian is hearing. It is an attitude that attempts to come up with a somewhat harmonic "vision" of Reality and Man's place in it—an attitude that, attentive to the word and words (of God), tries to reach a certain intelligibility.

The *fides* that is *quaerens intellectum* is the personal faith of the theologian. His starting point is formed by his still unarticulated beliefs. Theology is the passage from faith to belief. To be sure, he will have to check his beliefs with already existing dogmatic formulations. He will have to see whether he can harmonize *prima facie* contradictory statements. He will have to weigh all the possible arguments, in order to articulate his beliefs and purify his faith. But he will have to make a strenuous effort at self-understanding in the existential and historical situation where he finds himself living today. He is not an isolated researcher in a safe and safeguarded atomic plant, not caring about a possible world explosion. He is in the middle of all the hazards of being contaminated, and even of exploding himself. He is involved in

³ As Prof. Lancaster of the University of California reports.

a living and thus dangerous task; he suffers pangs of birth, conflicts of loyalties: but he is convinced that this search is an authentic Christian one. He knows that faith, like existence, is a gift of God, but also that faith is "not bound" to any definite formulation, for he has by now witnessed the testimony of history to the changes even in dogmatic statements. Moreover, he is well aware that it all depends on interpretation: *fides interpretanda*.

This is theology. The voices he listens to seem to bear witness to a new music; he hears very many tunes that seemed closed to many of his forefathers. Or rather, it seems as if he is hearing today many other voices of his own Indian ancestors that for centuries perhaps had been choked or simply not heard by his immediate predecessors. In the terms of postmedieval Spanish theology, the religions and traditions of India have become a *locus theologicus* of first importance, but not so much because of an objective existence as because of a subjective value in the mind and heart of the theologian himself.

Authentic theologizing has an inescapable mystical dimension. It has to proceed from an immediate contact with reality beyond concepts, memories, and intermediaries. The theologian is not an *intermediary*, a broker who brings two parties together, being himself detached from both. He is a *mediator*, a person who directly hears the words of God and the words of Men and who, literally "standing-under" the spell of both, strives toward a more complete "understanding." He is not artificially bringing together disparate doctrines, or trying a priori to unify what God—or History—has put asunder.⁴ On the contrary, he lives out of "naked" faith because he does not identify it with the contingent beliefs in which this faith needs necessarily to be clothed.

Theologizing in India will then be that spiritual, and thus also intellectual, effort of an existential incarnation into the geography and history of this part of the world, so that the subsequent growth in age, stature, and grace before God and men⁵ may yield its fruit at its proper time.⁶

⁴ See Mt 16:9.

⁵ See Lk 2:52.

⁶ See Mt 21:41.

THE PROBLEM OF AN INDIC THEOLOGY

The old idea of theology was that of an essentially a-historical discipline. At most, it could be temporal inasmuch as a certain homogeneous evolution was recognized: thus the theology formulated, say, at Nicaea could be made more explicit and become better formulated at Chalcedon or Florence. A certain development in the theological understanding was also acknowledged, but history was considered to be only the riverbed of theological consciousness, not belonging to the proper nature of theology. Theology as the formulation of revealed and thus eternal truths was considered to have an a-temporal core. To be sure, there was, along with a certain temporal development, a recognition of a psychological factor in the theologizing activity: the Germans might be more inclined to pure speculation than the French, Spanish theologians might give a mystical slant to their work that the Italian treatises lack, and the like. Thus theological varieties were explained: space and time were thought to be only external factors in the theological activity. But, properly speaking, there was no room for, say, a "modern" theology or a "European" theology, in spite of the obvious differences in the theologizing of peoples in different times and places. Theology was centered in God's immutability, although tempered by Men's partial approaches. With these assumptions, should an Indian theology be content with expressing one psychological type of theology?

It may be that until now there have been only *spatial* varieties of one single Western theology developing along one single *temporal* line. Theology has been the paramount reflection of the Greek *logos* on the Jewish YHWH in the light of the fundamental orientation given by the Trinitarian and christological disclosures of Jesus's kerygma.

I submit that a possible Indic theology in the *kairos* of our contemporary world can have a much more radical meaning. It is a theological and not a merely psychological category. To theologize in India at the close of the twentieth century could become a historical event of first magnitude in the human economy of salvation.

I divide this chapter into five sections: "Theology and History," "Theology and *Logos*," "Theology and *Theos*," "*Vāc* and *Logos*," and "The *Theos* and the Spirit."

Theology and History

Due to the growth of human consciousness, which in the last five hundred years has taken place mostly in the European scene, it is today an almost common theological conviction that the historicity of theology is not an "accident" in the "substantial" theological enterprise, but it enters into the very core of theology. Theology is a human activity and thus subjected to the historical nature of Man. But even if theology were the setting into motion of a supernatural organ, it would be still situated in space and time, both of which condition the theological enterprise intrinsically. Man is a historical being, and anything he

thinks or does is a function of the very historical parameters of his being. It is not that the courtiers of Aurangzeb did not know about computers: they *could not* know about them. It is not that Pāṇini did not speak German: he *could not* speak it. Or that Aśoka did not know the revelation of Allāh: he *could not* know it. Rather, they would have ceased to be what they were if those possibilities had been given them.

The historicity of theology does not make us the pawns of *relativism*, but only gives us the awareness of *relativity* and of the constitutive historical dimension of Man.

Theology as a human activity is intrinsically dependent on its historical situation. This entails more than psychological differences. It implies the awareness that the very act of theologizing depends on the historical situation of that act, and that this historical situation is intrinsic to the human being. The difference between Yājñavalkya and John of the Cross is not that they were situated in different spatiotemporal frameworks, but that a part of this framework belongs to the very essence of Yājñavalkya and John of the Cross. From this point of view, the patristic, Scholastic, Renaissance, Romantic, and modern theologies are not just heuristic divisions in a history of theology. They are different fundamental modes of theologizing, which is an essentially historical act. We cannot reverse that order, for instance. Chronologically reversed, these theologies would become incomprehensible, for each of them requires the previous one and is a new step, which has the previous one assimilated in it. The actual development is, of course, more complicated, for there are developed areas, neglected fields, negative influences, theoretical allergies, and so on, but all this does not invalidate the fact of the historicity of theology.

This fact is a *novum* in theological self-understanding, but after the modernistic and antimodernistic reactions is now being more and more widely accepted. The historicity of theology is more than the temporal unfolding of revelation, as the church fathers already knew, and also more than the gradual progress of Man's understanding, as the Scholastics had already discovered. It is the conviction that contingency penetrates deep down into the heart of Man, not leaving his mind untouched. It is the insight that we are not a-temporal souls poured down into mortal bodies, and along with them into ephemeral cultures. But that we are rather essentially growing, changing, temporal—in a word, historical—beings carrying the past within us, and pregnant with the future. We are not merely situated *in* history, we *are* historical. Our itinerant condition is not that of tourists in this world or vagabonds in quest of a better dwelling, but pilgrims in our inmost existence, involved in the common pilgrimage toward our own being—to quote Śaṅkara in a different context.

History does not so much consist in telling the succession of facts as in detecting the mutational events in the unfolding of the human adventure within the very destiny of Being. And in studying its impact on the very nature of Man, History means the collective aspect of *karman*, the cumulative character of the human being—whose past is carried over into the present, yet not stored in a computerized memory, but assimilated into the very nature of Man. His future is similarly present in his *tempiternal* nature, not as impinging his freedom, but embodied in the dimension of hope that is constitutive of Man.

In this sense, there could be an authentic Indic theology as the act of theologizing in the present Indian cultural and religious constellation.

In sum, an Indic theology can emerge if two mutations of the human spirit become incorporated into that *sui generis* construct that we call "theo-logy": a mutation in the nature of the *logos* and another in the experience of the *theos*. I describe the first in the coming section, and the second in the next.

Theology and Logos

We should become aware, at this juncture, of the ambivalent connotation of *logos*. On the one hand, it connotes simply word, saying, speech, language. *Logos* here is the *legein* (saying) of the *mythos*. On the other hand, it denotes reason, intellect, intelligibility, rationality. *Logos* here is the organ of the *nous* (intellect).

It has been the destiny of most Indo-European civilizations to have given an almost exclusive importance to the *logos* as *verbum mentis* or intelligibility, neglecting the nature and function of the *logos* as word, *vāc*, *dabur*, *memra*, and so on.

Theology has been currently understood as *fides quaerens ton logon* (qua intelligibility) and not as *fides quaerens verbum* (qua word)—that is, as faith searching for speech, language, dance, image, word. To be sure, the theology of Orthodox churches has seen in the *logos* also the *icon*, and modern theology seems to rediscover the integral nature of the Word in a sense very close to the Vedic speculation on *vāc*. But, in general, one may say that until now the most common feature of Christian theology is that of understanding *logos* as rational intelligibility.

We should underscore this double remark concerning Orthodox spirituality and contemporary trends. The Greek patristic and the later Slavonic, Russian, and in general Orthodox theologies, in a very special way, do stress again and again the holistic nature of the *logos* and the mystical dimension of theology. They constitute in fact an indispensable link with a possible Indic theology that is all the more precious as this same ancient tradition is still alive in Kerala. Contemporary spirituality, monastic and otherwise, due perhaps to Eastern influences, is also much more in tune with the main thrust of this paper. In point of fact, the Indic theology we are trying to describe does not come out of the blue, but is a historical development of our time.

Now it seems indisputable that, by and large, and giving due credit to the Jewish, Greek, Latin, North European, and modern forms of theologizing, the bulk of Christian theology has understood the *logos* mainly as intelligibility. I have just mentioned the Jewish (mainly biblical), Greek (mainly Orthodox), Latin (mainly Catholic), North European (mainly Protestant), and modern (mainly rational) theologies. These types represent the crystallization of an integral human experience when under the influence of the Christian *theos*. If there is to be an Indic theology, it cannot be a mere variation of the existing types; it will have to add a new level.

There will be an authentic Indic theology if there is a new *logos* actively and passively open to the mystery of the *theos*. This will happen if one can show that the Western understanding of the *logos* does not exhaust—in a fundamental and not only accidental way—the possible approaches to the Ultimate Reality.

In a word, the Indic theology would be the fruit of a kind of *cit* open and reacting to the directly or indirectly self-revealing *theos*.

I am not venturing names now, nor preferring *cit* to *jñāna*, *buddhi*, *manas*, or other Indic concepts. My point is simply the following: the *logos*-ingredient of "theo-logy" (be it the human *logos*, the divine, or both), as it has been usually understood in Western tradition, is only *one* approach to the *theos*, taking this last word as a symbol of God, the Infinite, the Absolute, *brahman*, Bhagavat, Future Reality, Mystery, or by whatever other name we may call "it." This is the point of the following section.

My contention is that the Western reception of *logos* does not exhaust other forms of awareness that could still be subsumed under an enlarged concept of *logos*.

Within the field of intelligibility, the *logos*, be it governed by the principle of identity or by the principle of noncontradiction, and understood as that power that lets a predicate

enter into a subject (makes the predicate intelligible to the subject), is not the only tool of understanding or the only organ for "apprehending" the real Indian wisdom—which, for instance, claims to reach the heart of the Real, or simply truth, by an operation that does not tally with the set of operations covered by this type of *logos*. Certainly, the burden of the proof lies on the Indian side. I am only presenting a case and raising a query. This could become clearer if we introduce into the picture the Chinese and Japanese ways of "thinking," which are still more distant from the Western branch of Indo-European culture. In any case, one thing should remain clear: we cannot assume anything to be humanly universal without an a posteriori endeavor and a critical appraisal of the immense variety of the human experience. And Indic wisdom, I suspect, has an awareness of the Real that is not covered by the common Western understanding of *logos*.

In the deepening and enlarging of the concept of *logos* I see a fundamental Indian contribution. I may give here only some hints. I submit that the deepest intuition of the entire Western tradition was the intuition, repeatedly formulated since Parmenides, regarding the intrinsic and coextensive relation between Thinking and Being. Thinking tells us what Being is, and thus unfolds or discovers the truth (*aletheia*) of things; thinking gives us the ultimate trust (truth) that we walk on firm ground when we are rational (sciences) and reasonable (ethics). The organ of this thinking is the *logos*. Theology is consequently that ultimate human wisdom that is acquired when Man thinks about his ultimate situation, taking into account all the data given to him, especially those given by a special disclosure of the divine Mystery itself.

The Indic genius, at about the same time, experienced another of these fundamental human options: the ultimate concern is not to know or to think of Being, but to let it be. Once the sages of the Upanishads realized that one cannot know the knower (otherwise, it would automatically become the known), they strived to be "it."¹ This letting Being be is precisely *mokṣa*, liberation. This process involves *prajñā*, but transcends it (*turiya*): it is conscious, but not self-conscious, not assuming a subject/object dichotomy, not even the knower/known one. It is self-refulgent, *svayamprakāśa*, pure awareness. It is at this level that theologizing in India acquires its full depth and takes its proper place. "Theology" becomes that participation in the awareness of the *theos* by means of which we become "it"—and also "let be" what perhaps "was" not yet.

The theologian here is not so much one who has knowledge about ultimate problems as he who has become the knower. Theology is then not primarily a science but a way of being; the Vedas of the *brahmavid* is not a knowledge "about" *brahman*, but a sharing in the pure Awareness that *brahman* "is."

It may be that a certain patristic understanding of theology as contemplation and holiness is very close to some Indic insights. Yet it is a fact that Indic Scholasticism has often fallen into intellectualism. This reminds us of the artificiality of watertight compartments: a certain typology of anthropological approaches to the Ultimate transcends the division between religious traditions. The fact remains, however, that, while in the West this interpretation has remained marginal, it has become central in classical India.

Theology and *Theos*

Precisely because the name of God is holy, it is not irrelevant. Precisely because the name of God is the fruit of our naming, and we name according to the self-disclosure of the "named," we cannot change names at will. Precisely because the word of God is a word and

¹ See BU II.4.14.

not a term (a label), we cannot take the "revealed" name of YHWH, or the "heard" names of Indic traditions, superficially.

The so-often-quoted *Rig Vedic* sentence that "the seers call in many ways that which is One"² does not say that the Nameless One exists like a Kantian "thing in itself" to which we then stick our tags. Each authentic Name is a real theophany. The epidemic of nominalism is a modern phenomenon.

After these two paragraphs, I should not be charged with making the enterprise easy, as if all were a question of reaching a cheap compromise by saying that different religions call one and the same divine Mystery by diverse names. The calling and the naming do also belong to the "thing" in the same way that the experienced reality belongs to experience, so that we cannot convert the epistemic object/subject distinction into an ontological split. To assume that 80 percent of the historical events of humankind, which have been caused because the peoples defended the names of their Gods, were just struggles for the copyright of a label, means to make such an accusation of general human stupidity that can only revert to the authors of the assumption. When the peoples fight for their Gods, they fight for their souls and identity. The *theos* of "theo-logy" is not a mere label.

A genuine Indic theology will not simply come about by emphasizing some divine attributes over some others, and coloring idiosyncratically the manifestation of the God of Israel. Yet, significantly enough, whereas the *logos* of "theo-logy" is a specifically Western *logos*, the *theos* seems to be a generic name, in spite of its Greek garb. It is not Zeus, but also not YHWH. And the best proof of it is probably Scholastic theology, which discovers a kind of philosophical God as Supreme Being who has not too many resemblances with the YHWH of the Old Testament or even the Father of Jesus. Scholastic theology is certainly not "YHWH-logy."

The first challenge for an Indic theology, from this point of view, is to elaborate an awareness of what I have called Mystery (again a Greek name), corresponding to that personal faith that is searching for understanding.

I have said that the first condition for an Indic theology is to find or to use another (type of) *logos*. It would not be proper to say that it has also to find or to use another (kind of) God, for the obvious reasons that the concept of Godhead defies any definition as well as any attribution of oneness or plurality. But it must be added that one of the main distinctive and constructive features of an Indic theology will be that of a radical revision of the conception and nature of the divine. The problems of the personality or trans-personality, the transcendence or immanence of "God" appear as immediate examples. A serious understanding of what goes under the inappropriate names of "monotheism" and "polytheism" also belongs here. The riches of Hindū tradition could be of an immense usefulness. But modern insights of a secular wisdom should also be taken into account. Indian theology is not only indebted to geography but also to history. We do not theologize for Śaṅkara's or Ramanuja's centuries, but for our modern world. Indic theology means "contemporary Indic theology."

In few places is the blend between tradition and modernity more necessary. The Indian theological reflection could here tread on a new ground, bringing together ancient and new insights into a new synthesis—without the burden of Western traditional Christian theology, which has committed itself to defending a fundamentally Abrahamic monotheism. The possible new vistas in the conception of the divine, the new vision of Advaita and Trinity, for instance, the new approach to atheism, the sacredness of the secular (which should not be confounded with the profane), are examples of contemporary problems on which an

² RV I.164.46.

Indic theology could say convincing words for our generation. But I will stop here lest I transgress the limits of a paper. Let me put instead, by way of example, a sociological corollary of what I intend.

In spite of all the efforts, successful and unsuccessful, of Western theology to further and further universalize the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so as to make Him believable to those who are not children of Israel; in spite of the abolition of the circumcision of the flesh³ and its replacement by a mystical circumcision of the heart,⁴ the fact remains that the Christian God, seen under a wider perspective, appears as tribal as YHWH might appear to sophisticated non-Israelites. I have to confess straightaway my sympathy for the tribal God, the only way of being a living God for a particular tribe. Deism is certainly not the answer to a "narrow" monotheism: Pascal was right with his attack against the philosophers' God and his defense of Abraham's living God. The question is whether being a Christian means to accept only the God of Abraham, or whether Abraham's God is humankind's only God.

It cannot be denied that, until now, in order to be a Christian, one had to be spiritually a Semite. Does this need to be always the case? Such a burning question belongs centrally to an Indic theology. The Indic culture does not belong to the Mediterranean world, the biblical Man cannot be said, *a priori*, to be the Universal Man. Does an Indian have to lose his or her anthropological features—his or her identity—in becoming a Christian? While the problems that face most existing traditional theologies can be met in a Vatican Council III or in similar conclaves, the challenge that a genuine Indic theology puts to Christianity requires a sort of Jerusalem II. If, in Jerusalem I, circumcision was the pledge of one covenant, and baptism became that of another, what will the destiny of humankind be when the different world traditions really meet and discover each other?

It is the role of a genuine Indic theology to pose the central and fundamental question for contemporary Man—not that of a few refinements of Western issues. The challenge is not a matter of degree, but of kind. A radical reflection is called for. If we all agree that we are at the end of a world period, and at the still obscure dawn of a new one, it belongs to the very function of an Indian theology (this new and late comer in the Christian theological arena) to put forward the most embarrassing but also most fundamental questions.

To sum up: an Indic theology would intrinsically mutate the theologizing subject, Man's *logos*, and also the theologized object, Israel's God. The task is enormous, and impossible to tackle with an object/subject epistemology, but here it may be appropriate to remember that "to God, no word is impossible."⁵ The birth of an Indic theology may amount to the birth of a new word.

Vāc and Logos

If theology purports to be ultimate Wisdom, the post-Cartesian sharp separation from philosophy should come to an end. We should rejoin the universal tradition of acknowledging one ultimate human attitude, which is called religion or *dharma* in its existential or practical aspect, and philosophy, or *brahmavidyā*, in its intelligible or awareness dimension.

The word *religion* as the existential path toward liberation, salvation, or fulfillment, and the word *philosophy* as the intellectual dimension of such a path (formed by the set of actions, symbols, etc., people believe in in order to fulfill the meaning of their lives): these

³ Acts 15.

⁴ See Rom 2:29, etc.

⁵ Literal translation of Lk 1:37.

two words have suffered such an inflation that they are hardly recognizable as what they primarily stood or still stand for. The word *theology* would like to put a remedy to this situation, but its chances are minimal. One of the crises of our times is precisely the incapacity of traditional words for being living symbols capable of eliciting authentic human experiences.

Though with no attachment to the word "theology," I would like to use it in the sense of expressing any possible reaction of Man in front of the Ultimate Mystery. In this sense, it would stand for the union between religion and philosophy as defined above. And it is here that the first and primary meaning of *logos* as integral word comes again to the forefront, and where *theos* means Ultimate Reality.

We have already said that *logos* as word (*vāc*) transcends the very field of intelligibility, and that neither *ratio* nor *cit* nor any other possible epistemological or intellectual term exhausts the possible "operation" with the Mystery. *Karmakāṇḍins* and *bhaktas* could be adduced here to substantiate my point. The *theo-karmic* experience of the Ultimate Reality is fundamentally different from that of a *theo-jñānin* or "theologian," and so is the experience of a *bhakta*. At the end of the operation of the *karmakāṇḍin* is sacrifice. At the end of the *bhakti-mārga* there is love. We can call these wisdoms "theologies" only if we transcend altogether the symbol of *logos* as intelligibility.

Intellect, *cit*, or whatever name of this sort, stands for a certain intelligibility and—to use a modern Western and fashionable word—a certain rationality. Now, rationality, scientific or nonscientific, does not cover the entire field of the *humanum*. I am not saying that Man is nonrational. I am only saying that rationality and thus thinking is not coextensive with Man, with Being, and thus with the Ultimate Reality, and therefore that there is a possible operation with the divine that has nothing to do with any kind of "gnostic" or *jñānic* approach. This operation does not belong to the *logos* as intelligibility; it does not directly relate to reflective awareness. It has to be said, however, that it will be generally accompanied by some sort of consciousness (*logos*), especially when we try to describe and understand it. But its *ontonomy* should be granted; that is, its proper and irreducible place cannot be denied without crippling human nature and cutting off an essential dimension from Reality. Here is where I see a possible and truly mind-blowing contribution of African theology—which does not reflect "on" the word, but simply lets the word be reflected in action, gesture, song, dance, matter.

It would not be appropriate to answer that, then, we no longer have anything to do with theology, because *this* is precisely the question. If theology is only the application of the one, well-defined *logos* to an equally well-defined *theos*, then we close the problem at the very outset. But if theology is understood in our above-described sense of any possible reaction of Man in front of the Ultimate, then the name *logos* stands for a symbol that transcends its commonly accepted concept.

It should be stressed that we are not referring here to anything subordinate, but to something that belongs to the same level as classical theological speculation. Here it is a question of theological activity, although it did not "reveal" itself as "theology" because it was not yet given an occasion of manifesting itself as such, or simply because it had not come into being as theology. Here it should be recalled what we said about the historicity of theology. "Theology" in that case would have still virgin dimensions, not yet born into existence. To embody one of these dimensions is also one of the proper contributions of an Indic theology, at the risk of even changing its name altogether.

An example may help to clarify this point. Political theology, mainly in Europe, and liberation theology, mainly in Latin America, are two expressions of a theological reflection triggered by taking the political and socioeconomic situations of the people as seriously as the injunctions of the Gospel. Yet, except for a few promising although not yet sufficiently

elaborated exceptions in the latter case, this emphasis on the praxis has left untouched the use of the classical *logos*. In other words, a theology of revolution has to begin by being a revolution of theology, that is, of the very conception of theology.

A reenactment of the *logos* as word (*śabda*, *śpoṭa*, *dhvani*, *vāc*, i.e., as a total manifestation and expression of the Real, which would lead to a truly cosmotheandric liturgy) may give us a clue for the rupture and continuity that characterize any genuine growth. The word *dharma* and even better *ṛta* could become a living symbol in India to express the entire gamut of values, from social justice and personal justification⁶ to historical liberation and cosmic *mokṣa*. It may belong to the Indian genius for unity and reconciliation to bring a differentiated harmony into the diverse human activities. A genuine Indian theology will hardly accept the dichotomy between political activity and intellectual contemplation, for instance.

The unavoidable consequence of the preceding reflections is the justification of a radical theological pluralism. By pluralism I do not understand the mere recognition of a plurality, but the impasse of the human mind, which, in taking cognizance of plurality, acknowledges at the same time a fundamental underlying unity, though without being able to fill that unity with any intelligible contents. This occurs because the units within the plurality are mutually incompatible. Theological pluralism is such because there exists a *theo-mythical* bond that links the different theologies together, but without reducing them to any intelligible unity. This is the place and function of the *mythos*.

This theo-mythical bond, I submit, is precisely the Word: the Word as the Firstborn of *Ita*, the Word that was in the beginning, the Word that transits through that peculiar animal we call Man, according to the often misquoted Aristotelian definition ("rational animal").

This "meta-theology" is obedience (from Latin *ob-audire*) to the Word, reenactment of the Word, much more than the science of the Word. It is the Word itself, the Word that speaks, is incarnated, manifested, responds, shouts, prays (*brahman*), sings. . . "God's word is not bound." The word is freedom, liberation, *mokṣa*.

Appendix: The *Theos* and the Spirit

If the foregoing considerations are taken seriously, the newness of theologizing in India may frighten more than one theologian concerned about not breaking the Christian tradition, which since its Jewish roots shows a continuity of almost four millennia.

Just to allay such fear, we may recall—first of all—that we are at a turning point in human history, and therefore the *real* questions are the radical ones.

Further, we may remember that, in spite of the Trinitarian nature of Christian theology, this latter has practically forgotten the Spirit, who knows every word and sound. It may be reserved to Indic theology to elaborate and deepen the experience of the Spirit, of the *ātman*. I should add that this approach would certainly not be a "theology of the Spirit," which would amount to falling into the old heresy of subordinationism, making the Spirit dependent of and inferior to the *logos*, but an "allowing" the divine Spirit to take the "initiative" in the shaping of the world, in renewing the face of the earth.⁷

Third, one may consider that, if the divine Spirit is the Spirit of the *logos*, this same Spirit blows where and how it wills.⁸ Or, in other words, we may recall that, while it is true that Christology is a central Christian concern, it is the Spirit that allows the passage to a universal

⁶ In the theological (St. Paul's) sense of the word.

⁷ See Ps 104:30.

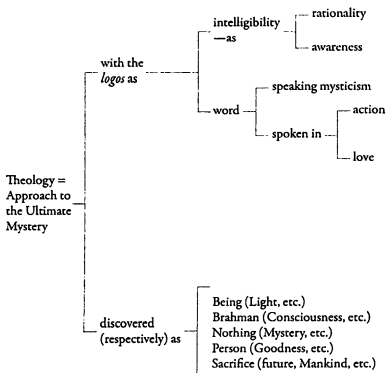
⁸ See Jn 3:8.

Christophany⁹ and thus to a genuine theologizing in the Indian context. It is here that I speak of a *theandrophany*¹⁰ as an irreducible category in the history of religions.

But this is only an appendix. I reserve an elaboration of this section for another essay.

. . .

The following schema sums up the main points of this paper.



⁹ Manifestation of Christ.

¹⁰ Divine-human manifestation.

GLOSSARY

All terms are Sanskrit unless otherwise specified.

ācārya: teacher of *Veda*, spiritual guide who imparts initiation. The term is anterior to *guru*.

adhyāsa: "superimposition" or false attribution of the various properties of reality (the relative on the Absolute, etc.).

advaita: a-dualism (*a-dvaita*). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with *monism*.

agnihotra: the daily fire sacrifice performed morning and evening in all homes of the high castes, which consists in an oblation of milk sprinkled on the fire.

aham: "I," first-person pronoun. *Aham* as ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from *ahaṁkāra* as a psychological principle.

ahaṁkāra: the sense of the *ego*.

ajñāna: ignorance.

ānanda: joy, bliss (cf. *sukha*), the delights of love, and especially the highest spiritual bliss; *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* represent three possible attempts at defining *brahman* or absolute reality.

antaryāmin: the inner guide; in the *Upaniṣads* it is the *ātman*, conceived of as an inner presence and guide of all beings.

anumāna: inference, one of the "means of knowledge" (*pramāṇa*).

arthāpatti: implication.

asya: "of this."

ātman: principle of life, breath, the body, the Self (from the root *an*, to breathe). Refers to the whole, undivided person and also to the innermost center of man, his incorruptible nucleus, which in the *Upaniṣad* is shown to be identical to Brahman. The Self or inner essence of the universe and man. Ontological center in Hinduism, which is negated in Buddhism.

ātmavāda: doctrine which accepts the existence of the Self, the *ātman*, as the essential, incorruptible center of being.

avatāra: "descent" of the divine (from *ava-tṛ*, descend), the "incarnations" of Viṣṇu in various animal and human forms.

avidyā: ignorance, nescience, absence of true and liberating knowledge, often identified with *māyā* and a cause of illusion and delusion.

avyakta: unmanifested.

Bhagavān (*Bhagavat*): "blessed, adorable, glorious, venerable Lord," a term used both for holy men and Gods.

bhakta: officiant, devotee, he who follows the path of love for God and is completely submitted to the divine (cf. *bhakti*).

bhakti: devotion, submission, love for God, personal relationship with God, devotional mysticism. One of the paths of salvation through union with the divinity.

bhakti-mārga: the path of love and devotion, one of the three classical spiritual paths (cf. *karma-mārga*, *jñāna-mārga*).

bhāṣya: commentary.

bindu: lit. "drop, point"; cosmological principle, an important concept in the philosophy of language and Tantrism: the most subtle element of the word and the cause of the disclosure of the universe. Related to *nāda*.

brahmaloka: the world of the *brahman*; sky; transitional stage.

brahman: Absolute Reality, that which fecundates everything.

buddhi: the highest faculty of the intellect; also comprehension, thought, meditation.

cit: root noun (from the root *cit-*, to perceive, to comprehend, etc.), meaning "consciousness, intelligence." One of the three "characteristics" of Brahman (see *sat*, *ānanda*).

citta: the mind as an organ of thought, the working mind (see also *manas*).

cosmotheandric: the nonseparation between World, God, and Man.

Dao, Tao (Chin.): "way," a central concept in Chinese philosophy, especially Taoism.

darśana: from the root *drś*, to see, to observe, hence vision, sight; philosophy, *Weltanschauung*. In a religious context it means the vision of a saint or God, hence also meeting, audience, visit.

dharma: cosmic order, justice, duty, religious law, religious and social observances transmitted by tradition; "religion" as a collection of practices and laws. That which holds the world together.

dhyāna: meditation, contemplation.

doxa (Gr.): glory.

dvaita: duality, dualism as a philosophical system.

ens commune (Lat.): common being, the abstract idea of being that is common to all beings.

ens realissimum (Lat.): absolutely real being (God).

ex nihilo (Lat.): (creation) from nothing.

extra ecclesiam nulla salus (Lat.): "outside the church there is no salvation."

filioque (Lat.): Trinitarian controversy between Latin and Greek theology; the former affirms that the Spirit is emanated from the Father "and from the Son."

guru: cf. *ācārya*; usually refers to one who has attained fulfillment.

hiraṇyagarbha: "the golden germ," a cosmological principle in the Veda, later identified with the Creator (*Brahmā*).

homeomorphism: theory used in comparative religion to discover functional equivalence in two or more religions.

idam: "this"; singular neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun. Generally means "this [universe]."

iṣṭadevatā (*iṣṭadeva*): the tangible symbol of the divine, the personal form of God, in worship and meditation; the icon of the divine that best corresponds to the culture, idiosyncrasy, and circumstances of each person or group; the concrete symbol through which the ultimate mystery is experienced.

Īvara, Īśa: the Lord, from the root *īś-*, to be lord, to guide, to possess. Although a generic term for Lord, in posterior religious systems it is more often used for Śiva than for Viṣṇu. In the Vedānta it is the manifested, qualified (*saguṇa*) aspect of Brahman.

janmādi: origin.

jīva: living being (from *jīv-*, to live); the soul in its individuality, as opposed to *ātman*, the universal soul. There are as many *jīva* as individual living beings.

jñāna: knowledge (from the root *jñā-*, to know), intuition, wisdom; frequently the highest intuitive comprehension, the attaining of *ātman* or *brahman*. *Jñāna* is the result of meditation or revelation. Cf. *jñāna-mārga*.

jñāna-mārga: the path of knowledge, contemplation and intuitive vision; one of the three classic paths of spiritual experience, generally considered superior to those of *karman* and *bhakti*, although many *bhakta* regard *jñāna* as merely as form of *bhakti*.

jñānin: sage, wise man, one who follows the path of knowledge, wisdom and contemplation (*jñāna-mārga*).

kaivalya: isolation, solitude, detachment; one of the spiritual states of supreme freedom.

kāraṇa: cause.

karmakāṇḍin: refers to those who emphasize the importance of the action, in occasions of ritual, for salvation/liberation.

karma-mārga: the path of action; one of the three classic paths of spirituality (cf. *bhakti, jñāna*). In the Vedas it refers to sacrificial actions viewed as the way to salvation; later includes also moral actions, or all actions that are performed in a spirit of sacrifice.

karman: lit. "act, deed, action," from the root *kr*, to act, to do; originally the sacred action, sacrifice, rite, later also moral act. The result of all actions and deeds according to the law of *karman* that regulates actions and their results in the universe. Later also connected with rebirth, it indicates the link between the actions carried out by a subject and his destiny in the cycle of deaths and rebirths.

kenōsis (Gr.): annihilation, emptying of oneself, overcoming of one's ego.

kérygma (Gr.): message, proclamation (of the word of God), from the Greek *kéryssō* (to proclaim), corresponding to the first level of the evangelical teaching.

kleśa: affliction, impurity of the soul.

līlā: divine game, the world as the amusement of God. This concept is not Vedic but Purāṇic.

lokasaṃgraha: the "keeping together, maintaining of the world" by the wise man and the saint through the sacred or liturgical action (concept of *Bhagavad-gītā*).

mahāvākya: "great saying." Refers to great expressions of the *Upaniṣad* that express very concisely the content of the experience of the Absolute.

manas: mind in its broadest sense, heart, intellect, the internal organ that is the seat of thought, comprehension, feeling, imagination, and will.

mantra: prayer, sacred formula (from the root *man-*, to think), sacred word, a Vedic text or verse. Usually only the part of the Veda consisting of the *Samhitā* is called a *mantra*. As it is a word of power it may also take the meaning of magic formula or spell.

mārga: road, path, way.

māyā: the mysterious power, wisdom, or ability of the Gods, hence the power of deceit, of illusion. In the Vedānta it is used as a synonym of ignorance and also to indicate the cosmic "illusion" that shrouds the absolute Brahman.

metanoia (Gr.): transformation, change of mentality or heart, conversion; going beyond (*meta*) the mental or rational (*nous*).

mīmāṃsā, mīmāṃsaka: one of the six classic systems of Indian philosophy which deals mainly with the rudiments and the rules for interpreting the Vedic writings. From the root *man-*, to think. The two main schools are the *pūrvamīmāṃsā*, which focuses on the ritual interpretation of the *Veda* (cf. *karmakāṇḍin*) and the *uttaramīmāṃsā*, which gives a philosophical and spiritual interpretation.

mokṣa: ultimate liberation from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of births and deaths, and from *karman*, ignorance and limitation: salvation. Homeomorphic equivalent of *sōtēria*.

- mumukṣutva*: desiderative form of the root *muc-* (cf. *mokṣa*); desire for salvation, and yearning for liberation, the necessary prerequisite for embarking on the path of liberation.
- mūrti*: solid form, body, hence incarnation, person, figure, statue, image. Mainly used for the sacred images of Gods. The *Veda* do not describe any cult of the image (*pūjā*), which is a development posterior to Hinduism.
- naiṣkarmya*: innocent action; abandonment of the action, inactivity or action free of desire, of the fruit.
- nāma-rūpa*: "name and form," the phenomenic world that constitutes the *saṃsara*.
- neti neti*: "not this, not this" (*na iti*), i.e., the negation of any kind of characterization of the *ātman* or *brahman* in the *Upaniṣad*; pure apophatism.
- nirguṇa*: absolute, without *guṇa*.
- nirguṇa-brahman*: Brahman without attributes and qualities, the unqualified, transcendent Absolute.
- nirvāṇa*: lit. "the going out (of the flame)," extinction. The word does not refer to a condition, but indicates liberation from all dichotomy and conditioning, whether it be birth and death, time and space, being and non-being, ignorance and knowledge, or final extinction including time, space, and being; the ultimate destination for Buddhism and Jainism.
- nous* (Gr.): mind, thought, intellect, reason.
- Pantokrator* (Gr.): the Sovereign of all; designates Christ and also God.
- paramā gati*: the supreme destination.
- pāramārthika*: ultimate level, Ultimate Reality, true reality.
- Parameṣvara*: the supreme Lord, God.
- pariṇāma-vāda*: theory of creation as the transformation of cause into effect. The effect is already contained in the cause; these are, respectively, the unmanifested and manifested state of one single substance.
- pramāṇa*: means for attaining valid knowledge.
- praṇava*: the sacred syllable *Om*.
- prasthāna-traya*: term referring to the three principle texts of the Vedānta (*Upaniṣad*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and *Brahma-sūtra*).
- pūjā*: worship, reverence, adoration. The concept is more closely related to the *bhakti* cult than the Vedic cult.
- Puruṣa*: the Person, the spirit, man. Both the primordial man of the cosmic dimension (*Rg-veda*) and the "inner man," the spiritual person existing within man (*Upaniṣad*). In the *Sāṃkhya* it is the spiritual principle of reality.
- Puruṣottama*: the supreme Person. The supreme Spirit or supreme Soul; designation of the Self as transcendent.

ratio (Lat.): reason.

res significata (Lat.): signified thing.

ṛṣi: seer, sage, wise man; the poet-sages to whom the *Vedas* were revealed. Regarded as a special class of beings, superior to men and inferior to the Gods. According to one tradition there were seven *ṛṣi*, probably the seven priests with whom Manu performed the first sacrifice and the seven poet judges in the assembly. Their identification with the names of ancient seers and with the stars of the Ursa Major occurred later (*Brāhmaṇa*).

śabda: sound, word. An aspect of Brahman as the revealed, the manifested.

saccidānanda: Brahman as Being (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), and Bliss (*ānanda*).

śaṅka: relative, not absolute, defined as *guṇa*.

śaṅka-brahman: Brahman with quality, corresponding in the Vedānta to *Īśvara*, the Lord.

śakti: energy, potency, divine power, the creative energy of God. The active, dynamic—feminine—aspect of reality or of a God (generally of *Śiva*). Personified as the goddess *Śakti*, consort of *Śiva* with a creative function.

saṃhāra: lit. "collection, accumulation"; the disintegration, destruction of the world, the universe at the end of a cosmic period.

sāṃkhya: literally, the "enumeration, numbering" of philosophical principles. One of the six traditional philosophical schools (*darsana*), the philosophy on which *yoga* is based.

saṃpradāya: tradition, religious system, and community that follows a tradition.

saṃsāra: the impermanent phenomenic world and the condition of identification with it, the temporal existence, the cycle of births and deaths, of conditioned existences; state of dependence and slavery.

saṃskāra: "sacrament," rites that sanctify the various important stages and events in human life. Also karmic residues, physical impressions left over from previous lives, which in some way influence the individual existence of a person.

sanātana-dharma: "law, eternal, imperishable religion," the name that Hinduism gives itself on the grounds of having neither founder nor temporal origin; the self-understanding of traditional religiousness in India.

sat: essence (pres. part. of *as-*, to be), existence, reality. Ultimately, only the Brahman is *sat*, as pure Being is the Foundation of all existence. In the Vedānta one of the three "qualifications" of the Brahman (cf. *cit*, *ānanda*).

satkārya-vāda: doctrine of creation according to which the effect (the world) pre-exists in its cause.

sensus plenior (Lat.): the fullest meaning (of a scripture).

skambha: cosmic pillar, the stable and invisible support of the universe.

sophia (Gr.): wisdom.

śrāddha: rite of homage to deceased relatives; offering to ancestors generally made by the son of the deceased and repeated on certain occasions. Consists in oblations of food to the ancestors and a meal for relatives and priests.

śrīti: creation, emanation.

śruti: "that which has been heard," the Vedic Revelation, an expression mainly used in sacred texts, Veda, and other authoritative Hindū scriptures, which reveal to the human spirit the entire *corpus* of the Vedas transmitted orally.

sthitī: stability, conservation, preservation (of the world).

śūnya, *śūnyatā*: void, vacuity, nothingness, the structural condition of reality and all things; represents the ultimate reality in Buddhism (cf. *nirvāṇa*).

sūtra: lit. "yarn, thread of a fabric." Short aphorism in a sacred text that generally cannot be understood without a comment (*bhāṣya*). The literature of the *sūtra* is part of the *smṛti* and is conceived to be easily memorized.

sūtrakāra: author of a *sūtra*.

svadharma: intrinsic personal order, suited to one's own situation, caste, religion, etc.

svarga: literally "that which leads to the light"; world of light, heaven, the highest of the three worlds, the home of the Gods.

tathāgata: lit. "the one thus come, who has attained being, who has extinguished himself," an appellative of Buddha.

tempiternity: non-separation between time and eternity.

theologoumenon (Gr.): theological enunciation, result and expression of the effort to understand faith and express a theological belief.

upamāna: comparison, one of the "means of knowledge" (*pramāṇa*).

vāc: word; the sacred, primordial, and creative Word; sound, also discourse, language, the organ of speech, voice. Sometimes only the *R̥g-veda* and other times all the Vedas are referred to as *vāc*.

vārttikā: additional commentary.

Vernunft (Ger.): intellect, intelligence.

viśiṣṭādvaita: *advaita* school of personalistic character, founded by Rāmānuja.

vivartavāda: doctrine of creation according to which the world is an illusory manifestation.

viveka: discernment, discrimination.

vyāvahārika: "relating to earthly matters, to mundane life," i.e., the earthly way of seeing, the practical perspective; the relative level.

yataḥ: "from where."

INDEX OF ORIGINAL TEXTS IN THIS VOLUME

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he was part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar held degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. He delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for intercultural dialogue, he also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of the Balearic Islands in 1997, the University of Tübingen in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the "Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades" for his book *El concepto de naturaleza* in Madrid in 1946 to the "Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo" in Italy.

Panikkar lived in Tavertet in the Catalanian mountains, where he continued his contemplative experience and cultural activities from 1982 until his death on August 26, 2010. There he founded and presided over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he was a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of *colligite fragmenta* as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodied a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), *Worship and Secular Man* (1973), *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1981), *The Silence of God* (1989), *The Rhythm of Being* (1989), *Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993), and *Christophany* (2004).

